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JAIL ISSUE**

SPIN

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BOY GEORGE

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW:
THE FULL STORY

**ATLANTA
CHILD
MURDERS**

THE SUPPRESSED INVESTIGATION

**KOOL & THE GANG
JAILHOUSE ROCK
SCRATCH ACID**

**JIMMY SWAGGART ROCKS OUT
CACTUS WORLD NEWS**



Material chronology present actual



"If you knew Peggy Sue,
Then you'd know
why I feel blue.
About Peggy,
Bout my Peggy Sue:
Oh, well, I love you, gal,
Yes, I love you, Peggy Sue:
I love you, Peggy Sue,
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Oh, well, I love you, gal,
Yes, I want you, Peggy Sue."

PEGGY SUE
Buddy Holly

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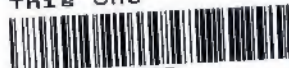
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October 1986

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TOP SPIN

Who's Who, What's What, and Why

Resisting the fundamentalist movement is like resisting a fog—a formless, clammy, enveloping proposition of zero good to anyone but fundamentalists. Nonetheless it is there, and we should not lie down and die because it is.

The fundamentalists attacking popular culture (now including modern art and—in Tennessee—textbooks, *The Wizard of Oz*, and even *Sesame Street*) are deceptively dangerous people with determined missions. In the case of the followers, they believe they are following the will of God, and if you want to know how deep a well of religious fanaticism can go, look at Khomeini's Iran. In the case of the heavyweight preachers, our modern-day carpetbaggers, they know a cause with a good emotional fund-raising hook when they see one. And like a pit bull attached to an unfortunate ankle, they ain't letting go.

When you demystify the fundamentalist passion you get a woefully misguided and just plain selfish set of ideals on the part of millions of Swaggart, Falwell, and Robertson's good sheep, who have bought the acres and acres of worthless swampland of an unfounded morality. A sort of no-money-down heaven sold by the cartel of this morality.

Recently I debated Jimmy Swaggart on TV on a streetfight of a program called *Crossfire*. I brought with me arguments against his enigmatic conclusions about rock music (some of which we've preserved, knowing a cult classic when we see one, in "The Gospel According to Jimmy," page 68). But Swaggart doesn't argue points, he merely repeats them, over and over, louder and louder, heaping more and more nonsensical attributions on his nonsensical propositions. We discussed, to the general bemusement of America, the connection between rock 'n' roll and bestiality, necrophilia, adultery, premarital sex, teenage pregnancy, Satan's role in it all, and something Swaggart euphemistically calls "cluster suicides," going on to describe a generation that sounded like lemmings. I don't recall we found any connections. But facts are, as a rule, superfluous to the sweet poetry of the preacher in full flight, and apparently it's rude to interrupt a self-made man of God with such trivialities.

Swaggart loves the teen suicide bit. He uses it often and everywhere. But according to the government's statistics, suicides among 15- to 24-year-olds have declined in recent years (and actually risen dramatically among 65 and over. What the hell are they listening to?).

Make no mistake, Swaggart is not a lunatic. I wish he was. As a people, we have mostly outgrown our fascination for lunatics, but we're still vulnerable to seducers. And whereas most of the major league preachers have the hit-and-run skills of the snake-oil salesman, Swaggart has the sensual hypnotism of the snake.

There are some very serious problems in America today but rock is no more to blame for them than the tooth fairy. There is not a thread, not an atom, of tangible evidence to show rock 'n' roll as a cause for drug addiction, teenage pregnancies, suicides, or crime. Rock does not enter souls and drive them to evil. It is not inspired by Satan nor condemned by God, only by the charlatans who, ironically, are the ones taking God's name in vain, using it as an uncensored and unlimited endorsement on what is approaching a billion dollar industry.

Rock 'n' roll is the perfect made-for-TV target. The fundamentalists are nothing if not cunning, and they have put rock in a "knight's gambit": to defend music we have to debate a premise that we, of course, don't accept: that there is something dangerous and evil about music. There is, admittedly, some portion that is distasteful, but our Constitution doesn't make taste distinctions—yet.

Talking about tasteful, Jimmy Swaggart grosses \$150 million a year, according to him, on such crusades as: "Music: The New Pornography" and "Abortion: America's Greatest Crime" and tangential moral excursions such as homosexuals being worthy of death, communists not deserving the fate of even the poor homosexuals, Catholics charged with merely not being worthy of heaven (maybe they copied a plea?), dancing as sin, and modern art—I forget, but he doesn't like it, and he had reasons and if you meet him and want to impress him, don't start by talking about your modern art collection.

In a recent issue of *USA Today*, a



Brian Littleholes



A. J. Pontusa

fundamentalist advocate wrote bitterly of "fundamentalists often [being] targets of bigotry" and the media's bias against "conservative Christians." On face value, if true, it would seem a legitimate gripe. Actually, the media and the average person are equally biased against—and wary of—Khomeini's zealots, Khadafi's terrorists, the nice people who bomb abortion clinics to protest life taking, the Ku Klux Klan, and the American Nazi Party—in short, any group of impassioned fanatics who want to forcibly tear up the world and replace it with their inflexible values. Fanatics are scary, like drunk drivers.

The fundamentalists argue that all they want to do is return America to good, old-fashioned Christian family values. I say if they want to return to the Interdict, that's OK, as long as they do it

in their own homes.

In the end, the most American value of all is live and let live. And that comes from the Bible.

—Bob Guccione, Jr.

Top: *SPIN* publisher Bob Guccione, Jr. (far right) making sure he heard the Reverend Jimmy Swaggart correctly on CNN's *Crossfire*, with host Tom Braden (left). Bottom left: illustrator Ori Holmekler. Right: Kool & the Gang's J.T. Taylor.

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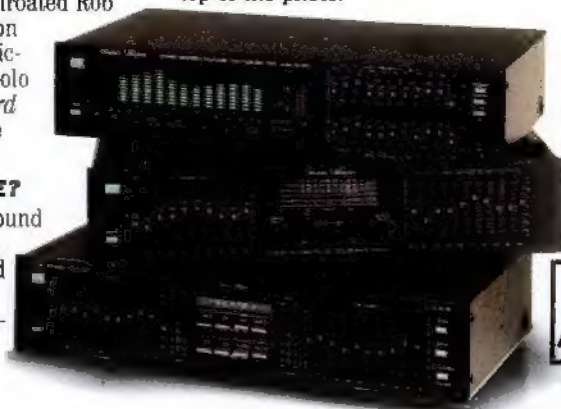
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POINT BLANK

Letters

Edited by Karen Dolan

No Stones unturned

We appreciate being quoted in SPIN as much as the next fellow, but Nick Kent's interpretation of *Musician's* Rolling Stones article (August) was a little less concerned with accuracy than with pizzazz.

Kent juxtaposed his phrases pretty cleverly, so that the reader gets the impression that A) Keith was furious because of what Mick had said to *Musician* and that B) the article in *Musician* precipitated Mick's flight back to London. The beauty of Kent's execution is that the reader is left with the impression that the writer said more than he did.

Kent says here "... if the singer left the Stones, as he told *Musician* he would..." Jagger didn't tell *Musician* any such thing. Jagger was the soul of diplomacy, saying he had no plans to tour with or without the Stones. Next, Kent credits *Musician's* "numerous American 'confidants.'" First, who said they were American? Second, putting "confidants" in quotes implies it was our term; it wasn't. We said "gossip whores"—implying, "take this with a grain of salt."

I hope that if enough people claim the Rolling Stones are finished, those contrary bastards will tour again just to prove us wrong.

Bill Flanagan
Executive Editor
Musician magazine

Look, anyone who grew up with the Stones knows that the band has never been able to fill the creative void left by the death of their cofounder, Brian Jones. Since that time, the Rolling Stones have been a predictable, if not solid, rock 'n' roll band living off their original accomplishments. Today's band is a mere shadow of what was once an

energetic, shocking, and innovative unit whose talent was matched by the Beatles. The Fab Four quit in 1971, Brian is gone, and it's about time the boys pursue their own careers.

Tom Cassidy
New York, NY

Purple rage

Concerning your recent article on Prince (July)—what is its purpose? To say that Prince is black? If so, Mr. Bull has a startling grasp of the obvious. Was the purpose to provide a review of Prince's career? Then why start with the second album? Mr. Bull claims that Prince's main problem is that he is black and that having his music identified as black was a "tactical mistake." Bullshit. Listen to the music, get past the "purple haze" that surrounds Prince, and actually learn something.

Rosalinda Johnson
Regina, Saskatchewan

Thank you for the article on the wondrous purple one. It proved insightful. However, the mulatto myth must end. When Prince first started his career, he used to fill his interviews with lies in order to create "controversy." But we know and Prince knows that it's only in the movies that his mother is white. Many black Americans have some "other" blood mixed in, but they are not mulattoes, quadroons, or any other such nonsense. We are black, period.

Shelley Evans
Daresha Kyi
James Bernard

Run-D.M.C.

Thanks for John Leland's article on Run-D.M.C. (August). It's exciting to see a band of that genre receive print. As a form of music, hip hop is hard—not only in style, but to define and talk about in a way everyone can understand. But rap is real and here to stay. What was of interest to me were the roots of the band and how vital the street remains to Run-D.M.C.'s essence. This street-level, no-nonsense attitude is reflected in all their lyrics, and they will probably stand true years from now—even after L.L. Cool J starts shaving.

A northern B-boy
Surrey, British Columbia

A whiter shade of pale

Although the Black Rock Coalition is covered well, the review of the Ventures (Spins, July) is enough to make anyone pissed. The "quality of whiteness" concept that has infiltrated Lou Stathis's mind puts us back to the racist mentality that we've tried to overcome for so long. Everyone's praising the Statue of Liberty, but the attitude still prevails that nonwhites are trash. You



Mick Jagger, above: It's not over until the skinny guy sings.

condemn racism in so many of your articles, and then you let this dogma get printed. Make up your mind, SPIN, about what color your skin is, or if it really makes a difference.

Pete Piccaro
Manhattan Beach, CA

SPIN career corner

Everyone's entitled to their own opinion. My only problem with Peter Carbonara's review of Icehouse's *Measure for Measure* (Spins, August) is that it gives no opinion. The whole review is full of weak one-liners that fail to amuse me. *Measure for Measure* is outstanding. After all, why would one of the greatest rock producers today, Brian Eno, play keyboard for them if he didn't think they had any talent? I recommend that Carbonara stick to reviewing

albums. If he intends to become a joke writer, here's one reader who thinks he'll be on the unemployment line.

Marc Klein
Margate, NJ

Corrections

In "We're a Happy Family" (August), Ramones drummer Mark Bell was said to have been replaced because of serious drug and alcohol problems. Bell has never had problems with drugs. He has since cut the booze out of his life and has formed a new band, King Flux, with former Plasmatic Richie Stotts.

In "I Was an Elderly Teenage Bimbo for MTV" (September), the resplendently bearded gentleman in the photograph is incorrectly identified as ZZ Top guitarist Billy Gibbons. It is in fact bassist Dusty Hill. Boy, are our faces red.

The photos of Metallica on pages 60 and 61 of the August issue were taken by Gene Ambo.

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FLASH

Edited
by
John Leland



Paul O. Cellier

FLIP YOUR WIG

From a Big Stick press release, issued following the death of founding member Trevor White:

"Trevor White got in a fatal car crash while driving under the influence of alcohol. Minutes before he died, he said to the paramedics as they worked to free him from the orgy of steel, 'I was an asshole for driving drunk, now I'm gonna die.'"

Big Stick live in Astoria, Queens, wear massive Tina Turner wigs over leather Batman masks, and make abrasive, disjointed music with this same gutless sense of black humor. Their "Hell on Earth" EP, released on the group's own Recess label, is like the fragments of a nasty-looking

gargoyle dug up and put together in the wrong pattern: full of awkward contradictions and funny juxtapositions. It is a brilliant record, the absolute favorite of perhaps 12 people in this country alone, and Top 10 in the English indie charts. But it might never have happened.

Big Stick have never been what you'd call prolific. At the time of White's death last year, he and bassist/drummer/singer Yanna Trance had been together as a duo for five years, with only two live performances and no records to show for their efforts. They didn't rehearse. When White died, Trance decided to get serious. She enlisted fan John Gill to play guitar

and sing. The two took their Walkman to Raceway Park in southern New Jersey to record sound effects for "Drag Racing," which Trance calls a "tribute to Trevor White [giggle]," then used it to record the rest of their EP at a total personal cost, including manufacturing, of about \$1,000.

Then they bought the wigs.

Eight hundred dollars worth of teased, spiky porcupine bushes. Trance's is dirty blond. Gill's is black with a gray streak. "It just had to coincide with the release of the record," says Trance. "Coming out with it on vinyl was sort of a celebration."

"We got them from a Japanese woman in the city," says Gill. "One time we were sitting in her store and waiting for them—"

"And they had one on display that Cher was picking up that night," interrupts Trance. "It was a really, really long white one—maybe six feet long, with curls—"

"And Cher's limo driver came in to pick it up, and that was really exciting. I guess."

Big Stick's wigs are too good to save for special occasions. They wear them everywhere. Trance showed up for an interview in silver cowboy boots, Morticia-Adams-gone-bimbo weeds, the rug, and a leather Batman mask. Gill sported a watercolor temporary spider tattoo, thick black-leather armband, wig, and mask. "Sometimes if we go out and try to get a cab," he says, "they treat you like you're the Munsters. When we were in England, normal people like the doorman started conversations. They just take for granted that they can talk to you because you look like this. In a corny way, it's like a theatrical thing, although we don't blow up and stuff like that. We just do it to draw the music away from the artsy kind of thing that it was and maybe present something that would be more... I don't know. Not necessarily shock value, but something that people would remember. As opposed to just maybe being good and going out there and not shocking people, it's cool."

If Big Stick has a theme song, it is "I Look Like Shit." The song begins with the universal quest for identity: "I might be ugly as shit/But I can play this guitar." It proceeds through teen rebellion—"I might not know the alphabet/Tough shit"—and ends in resignation: "The old lady says we gotta turn it down, boys." Says Gill, "It was a song that everybody could relate to at some point. It's a real thing, how people feel. That song makes a lot of people feel good. We have to tell people that we all have to work together in a circle of love." —John Leland

Big Stick's John Gill and Yanna Trance: dressed to kill, built for speed.



Ann Saunders

X-TREME COMICS

Sue Coe would like to see kids picking up her book *X*, a slim volume of paintings and text that is both a homage to Malcolm X and a feverish diatribe against capitalism and its discontents. She hopes the book is "accessible and not pompous, accessible to kids. Even if one kid picks it up, wants to read more about Malcolm, wants to read the *Autobiography*, that would be great."

Any kid picking up *X* expecting a comic

book is likely to flip the pages, put it back on the rack, and proceed to *Alpha Flight* and *X-Men*. But Coe *did* make the thing accessible; it's *right there*, with oil and pencil images of the rich feeding on the poor that hit the reader with a howl of outrage.

X is a collection of socialist tableaux, many featuring Malcolm X as a kind of pilgrim in the land of the oppressed.

Landlords appear as sharks and wolves, Reagan and Thatcher as copulating dogs, and—that old agitprop favorite—capitalists as pigs with top hats. Coe, a sought-after illustrator when she's not inciting the masses, renders this animal farm in a series of resolutely paranoid nighttime scenes accompanied by verse sloganeering, such as, "Heroes: those who exploit best. Losers: those who identify with all the rest."

X is the latest in a series of "RAW one-shots"—small, beautifully produced picture books from the publishers of *RAW* magazine, a publication best (albeit vaguely) described as a comic book for grown-ups. *RAW* editor Francoise Mouly says the seeds for *X* were planted by Coe's previous *RAW* book, *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa*. "Basically, what we aimed at doing, and I think we succeeded," Mouly says of that project, "was a political pamphlet that would also be especially interesting to look at."

For *X*, the two adopted a similar strategy. "Sue was very interested in Malcolm X and had been reading his autobiography and lots of books about him," says Mouly. "We were less interested in Malcolm X *per se*, more interested in doing again a political pamphlet that would have some impact." Mouly, Coe, and *RAW* editor Art Spiegelman expanded the scope of the project beyond Coe's pictures of Malcolm. "When I chose the pictures for the book," Mouly continues, "I ended up choosing some of those and some of the other ones she had done around the same time, which

included the US bombing of a mental hospital in Grenada and a number of other things that didn't have any obvious relationship to Malcolm X. The definition of this book was to be able to incorporate all of those various concerns. What did they have in common? What was the driving force?" Journalist Judith Moore was also brought in to write a chronology of "concurrent events" to place *X* into historical context. (Novelist Ishmael Reed was initially suggested for that job, but, says Mouly, "In picking up some of his books, Sue got very offended by his antiwoman stance.")

Coe agrees that Malcolm is, for her purposes, a "myth built on a myth. There's no way you can do a book about Malcolm X now because he's gone into the land of an icon. So the book in a way has nothing to do with Malcolm X. It has more to do with the social forces that make up any progressive individual." Coe also sees the book as a way to reclaim a legacy smeared by the mass media.

To this end, the back cover shows a smiling Malcolm holding a paintbrush with which he has x-ed out one of Coe's nightmare images of America. "I think he had the rage of his people," Coe says, "and that broadened out to the struggle of the people of the world, and it was love, it was all based on love. I mean, I don't want to sound trite or sentimental. He had so much love in him, and I saw the photographs of him smiling. He smiled a lot. He was a nice bloke."

—Peter Carbonara

Don't Call Them Mellow Yellow

Rolo McGinty, elfin singer and main songwriter for the Woodentops, has a penchant for post-Hawaiian shirts and a mane of overlong black curls that make him look like a folkie poet from the late '60s. The band's name comes from a British children's TV show from the same period that featured the antics of a family of clothespins and a nightmarish figure called Spotty Dog.

In Great Britain, Rolo and his band have an image problem.

The Woodentops have released a clutch of songs that owe more to Suicide and Bo Diddley (sort of) than clothespins. Songs like the deranged, frenetic "Move Me" and the intense "It Will Come" revealed the "Tops to be a pop group with an obsession with repetitive, furious rhythm and melodic frenzy. Their debut LP, *Giant*, brings all this together most successfully; yet here I sit, accusing Rolo of writing somewhat—or, *two* songs. Take "So Good Today," in which Rolo appears to be insisting that everything is right in the world, the weather is fine, he's extremely happy, and—for all I know—war is over if you want it to be. A cloud flits across Rolo's pixieish features.

"Bullshit!" he cries, very un-Donovanlike. "Bullshit! Bullshit! That's a totally personal song, and it's got nothing to do with the rest of the world at all! It's just the fact that somebody can make you completely unaware of the rest of the world for five minutes. I think it's a brilliant song; it's so simple, it's unbelievable."

The elfin grin returns. "It's so normal that maybe it shouldn't be the next single."

The next single, whatever it turns out to be, will be released in the US on Columbia. The

Woodentops now face the prospect of trying to balance indie status in the UK—where they're signed to Rough Trade—and major label status here. "The fact is," says Rolo, "we don't fit in. We don't fit into the indie scene, and we don't fit into the majors scene. We're not like one of those Doors-Velvetsy bands. Right at the moment, the whole thing is really confused."

"I can't understand this indie ghetto business, because there's always been a difference between people who want to be noticed and people who just want to be known on a small scale. It's really difficult to tell who is which. I haven't ever had a lot of faith in the indie scene. With a lot of people, if the chance was there for them to change the way they are, they'd take it. It's funny—originally, the big companies weren't interested in you. And now you go and see the Mighty Lemon Drops, and there's loads of A&R bastards from WEA in the audience."

In the center of all this confusion, Rolo still has the Woodentops. He is delighted that Rough Trade releases his records in Britain ("They let us bring out five crazy singles, and they let us mix our records"), and he stands by the group's music. "Even if I have misgivings about our LP," he says, "if you compare it to the Simply Reds this world still sounds really punky and messy, so it's all right."

So there's Rolo, a happy man. He likes Yello, Adrian Sherwood, the Jazz Butcher, and Can; he thinks Billy Bragg is "brilliant, like one of those old-time comedians," and he's made a splendid LP with his cohorts. Maybe everything really is right in the world.

—David Quantick



Ann Saunders

The Woodentops: a bunch of white wimps sitting around impersonating Bo Diddley.



Matioka

DOMINO THEORY

"I'm a very nervous person. My first record is so quiet and shy, I find it impossible to listen to. Just excruciatingly painful, because it sounds like someone who is being quietly flailed alive."

In her brother's lower Manhattan loft, Anna Domino clutches her slender knees together, jerks her bleached blond head absently from side to side, and speaks in a meek Michigan accent about being the quietest and slowest-blooming product of the original New York punk scene. "If I wanted to, I couldn't make an aggressive record. I think it has a lot to do with how I hear sound. I don't really think it's the songs that are quiet. It's the production, and my voice, which has hardly any dynamics whatsoever. It's almost like talking."

Anna Domino makes fragile, pristine pop and dance music that's as calculatingly stylish as you would expect from a former fashion designer. She uses synthesizers that sound like marimbas to construct spare neo-Motown and neo-lounge riffs around her breathy hermetic tales of lethargy, myth, and romance. Her music is both familiar and alien: stateless. The former Anna Taylor is a global vagrant: born in Tokyo, weaned in Ottawa, raised on Motown in Ann Arbor, reborn through new wave in New York in the late '70s, and now commuting between Brussels and New York. "Most musicians I know from New York are doing more work in Europe and Japan than they are in America," she explains. "If I wasn't working in Europe, I doubt if I would have a recording contract. It's going to be hard for me to build an audience here, because my sound is so small."

Domino's Belgian label, Crepuscule, recently hired Arthur Baker to remix her breezy single "Summer" and she hopes this will help her land a US record deal. However, she is confused by the interest labels have shown. "I wish they'd let me in on their plan. I wish they'd tell me who they think that I'm close enough to that they would be interested in me. Do they think that I'm their Suzanne Vega, or maybe they think that with the proper producer I'd be something like Sade."

"When I first came to New York, everybody and their brother and sister were joining bands. So I just thought, right, I'm just one of the satellites on the fringe of this huge thing. It was exciting, but I knew pretty much that I was just kinda hanging around, waiting for something to happen that I didn't think would. But it kinda did. It just takes a long time when you're extra shy."

—John Leland

If you're ever going to meet Merle Haggard, leave your Mekons T-shirt at home. When the band members met Merle backstage in Chicago, the Hag didn't take too well to the hammer and sickle on the group's logo. "It was a bit hairy," singer and guitarist Jon Langford remembers of the drunken encounter. "It would have been a bad idea to ask him what he thought of Libya, though that's just the sort of thing we were likely to do. He never actually said anything to us, but stared a lot and gave off very bad vibes. Had we gotten too carried away, there was a good chance that we'd have been hospitalized."

Politics aside, the Leeds-based band has a lot in common with Haggard. Playing an updated and Cajun-influenced version of English country music, the Mekons are bringing attention to a style that's all but dead.

The band started out as a bunch of angry young punks in the flush of punk's first wave and came upon their new sound largely by accident. They were

Punks on the Lost Highway

recording their third album, 1982's *The Mekons Story*, when the engineer suggested that it sounded like English country music. "We had never listened to it before," says singer and guitarist Tom Greene. "But after he played some records for us, we saw the similarities."

The Mekons' career has been a series of such happy accidents. When they couldn't find a label for their fourth album, a moneyed divorcee and fan named Sophie Bourbon offered seed money to form the group's own Sin Records. The band, whose numbers sometimes swell to as many as ten full- and part-time members, encourage ran-

dom encounters with fate. For example, guitarist Dick Taylor, a former Rolling Stone and Pretty Thing whom they met in the studio, doesn't even know most of the band's songs. "Usually, we tell Dick that there's a gig, and he shows up three or four numbers into the set," says Langford. "He runs through the audience with a guitar and a little amp, gets onstage, and plugs in."

The rest of the group howls in agreement, and Tom Langford orders another round of drinks. Rowdy and affable, the band members treat themselves with a self-deprecating sense of humor, insisting that their success has been the result of hazardardness. Not taking themselves too seriously may be what's kept the Mekons together for so long. "We couldn't be bothered to break up because we care so little about what we do," guitarist Kevin Lycett deadpans. "We'd never split up over musical differences because none of us know anything about music."

—Michael Kaplan

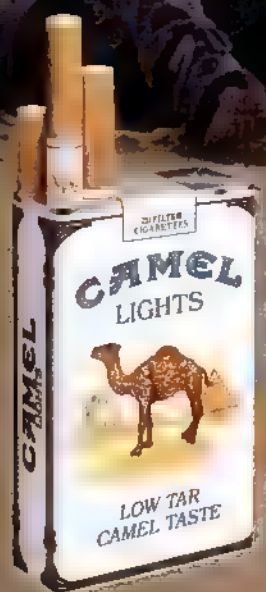


Bonnie Graham

Merle, meet the Mekons (Back L-R) Jon Langford, Kevin Lycett, Steve Goulding (Front L-R) Rico Bell, Susie Honeyman, Tom Greene.

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"We want our audience to be the working class," says Andy Perry, lead singer of Easterhouse, over a couple of pints of dogma and rhetoric in a London pub. "But that doesn't mean we have to adopt this condescending approach of just singing, 'Break it down, smash it up, tear it into pieces.' What is 'it' anyway? The difference between us and [fellow agitproppers] the Redskins is that their songwriter comes from a public school and thinks that if you want to reach the working class you've got to use words of one syllable. I'm working class myself so I know that if I can conceive of these ideas, then someone of my class can understand them."

In the course of an English pub lunch, Andy and his guitarist brother, Ivor, throw caution to the bartender, ranting about the war against Argentina (Ivor: "Of course I wanted England to lose"), Hitler, the Revolutionary Communist Party—to which all the members of the band belong—and the working class. And eventually, they talk about their music. "I don't think we talk about it enough, personally," says Ivor. "It does tend to get ignored."

Easterhouse makes powerful music of desperation and desolation that combines Andy's interest in Irish folk music with Ivor's prefer-



Courtesy CBS Records

Burning Down the Easterhouse

ence for the Stooges and Pere Ubu. On the new *Contenders* album, the band generates an atmosphere of mysticism that puts Easterhouse closer in spirit to the melancholy of Joy Division than the Revolution

Rock postures of the Clash or their acolytes. "Joy Division was definitely a huge influence on us," says Ivor. "They had an imaginative approach to sound, but there was this elemental power there that

Easterhouse preparing to address the working class. (L-R) Peter Vanden, Andy Perry, Ivor Perry, Kike Murray, Gary Rostock.

came from it being the basic unit of a band. That's what I'm trying to do with the music—just get to that raw elemental power, like you hear on the first two Stooges LPs."

Contenders has been an enormous British success, pushing Easterhouse to the No. 2 spot on the English indie charts, behind Rough Trade labelmates the Smiths. They've reached the point at which their aggressive politics may start to hold them back. Will they end up like U2, just another stadium band?

"They're a totally different matter," says Ivor. "They've started with this broad liberal-left approach that we should have peace in Northern Ireland, and everybody should eat. Things that everybody wants anyway, but which aren't going to happen without fundamental change. We're far more honed."

All the same, the band was bemused at the ease with which CBS, its American label, misread the group's politics. "I think the A&R man seemed to think we were Pat Benatar," says Ivor. "We were surprised that a company of that size would be interested in us, so we asked, 'What do you think the American audience will make of the politics?'"

"He just says, 'They'll love 'em. Kids in America hate their parents, too.'"

—Don Watson

Brazil 1986

Everybody wants to go to Brazil and nobody wants to leave. Least of all Brazilians. Last but not least of all Milton Nascimento. Sitting serenely in his New York hotel suite, flanked by a dating publicist and a translator, Milton is already homesick after touring the US for *tres semanas, seis dias, dos horas e...* [consults wrist, laughs]... twenty minutes."

Why leave paradise? Back home Nascimento draws hundreds of thousands to hear his elegant jazz/classical/folk-tinged compositions. "We've played to as many as 300,000," he says, "because only to do theaters means ticket prices have to be very high, and that does not work with the reality of Brazil." In the US, he is the best-known and best-selling Brazilian artist. His latest release, *Encontros e Despedidas* (Meetings and Departures), is his first in many years to be distributed by a major US label, and Nascimento is touring behind it. "It is like the start of my career all over."

Born in Rio, Nascimento, who is black, was adopted by white middle-class parents and raised in the rural town of Tres Pontas in central Brazil. "According to my mother, in the hour that I was born, I wasn't crying, I was already singing. When I was very young, I had a harmonica and I would sing and act out stories and fairy tales for the older children. Working on music started in Tres Pontas with my family and friends. My house was an open house and there were many who came to share. In my house, nothing was ever prohibited."

Nascimento moved to São Paulo in 1965 to make it in the music world. "I give thanks to François Truffaut for putting me on my way. He inspired my first song. When I was 19, I saw *Jules et Jim*. Everything moved me: the photography, the situation, the direction. Until then I had been singing other people's songs. After *Jules et Jim*, I thought: 'I have to do something with my life!'"

Over the next decade—when Brazil was ruled by a military dictatorship that made it difficult for artists to work freely, and some, like Gilberto Gil, went into exile—Nascimento revitalized pop music in the country, weaving together influences from his African heritage, his rural childhood, and European and American music, becoming the voice of this multi-ethnic nation. "I speak for all those people who cannot get to the microphone. This gives me an enormous responsibility. From all sides there are pressures on me to sign things, to participate in political movements. I see myself as a comrade, but I want to express and talk about all the human facets."

In concert Nascimento makes political statements—the centerpiece of one set is a spooky percussive tribute to Winnie Mandela—but what predominates is his spiritual intensity. He sits quietly center stage, a floppy denim hat hiding his face, and begins to sing, in Portuguese: "All love is sacred." In Brazil he often performs with a full orchestra and choir; he's composed a ballet and a mass for freed slaves (he is a devout Christian); he wants to score, direct, and act in films; and he has a "writing desk hidden with poems and short stories."

"Every musician has his own beat. Mine is the beat of my heart. I believe that music transcends language. I want to see my music performed in any and every part of the world. The US is the gate of the world. So, therefore, I begin here."

—Daisann McLane



Chris Carroll

Love Is All Around

It's happy hour at the Wuh Wuh Hut, on New York's Lower East Side. Peter Zaremba, the lead singer of the Fleshtones and the host of MTV's *Cutting Edge*, stands under the tomb of King Tut with 111 other guiding lights of the Love Delegation, wearing flowered jackets and sipping vodka and lemonade. The Delegation—which includes such luminaries as Fleshtone Keith Strong and blues bellow Barenice Whitfield of Boston's Savages—is the Fleshtones with funk, rock with a rumba rhythm and a helping of soul. Zaremba calls it "Afro-psychedelic-Latin." Their debut LP, *Spread the Word* (Moving Target), comes complete with love beads and offers music to send revelers into a tango—or at least into a cha-cha towards the bar.

The Love Delegation came together simply because the name was too good to pass up. "Fleshtone fans in Tampa, Florida, wandered through the streets stealing flowers and presented us with garlands. They proclaimed themselves the Love Delegation," explains Zaremba in the flattest Long Island accent ever. "So the name was around before the band was," says Strong, his skinny frame weighed down by psychedelic medallions. "Just like the Fleshtones. Crayola's flesh-tone crayon. Didn't look like flesh though," he sniffs. "It looked like shrimp," says Zaremba.

The Love Delegation's first meeting was a cocktail party thrown to discuss which songs to sing. "It was so civilized," says Zaremba. "We sampled rare liquor from around the world." Members were chosen for their stance on the subject of love. "Let's face it," the singer blunts, "Lydia Lunch couldn't be a Love Delegate, right?" Honorary delegates: Hoodoo Guru Dave Faulkner, someone named Tippie, and Jonathan Richman. The congregation is dedicated to spreading—not slurring—the word "love." "There are a lot of bands coming out, 'Love this, love that,'" Zaremba complains. "And quite honestly, they are using it in a sarcastic sense. We're not. There are a lot of English bands using love. Love? English bands? That doesn't add up." So, lost treasures about the subject were dug up (Laura Nyro's "Stoned Love," "Mountain of Love," the O'Jays' "Love Train," Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazlewood's "Some Velvet Morning").

Many of the album's transcendent moments belong to Barenice Whitfield, whom Zaremba pronounces one of the greatest singers in the country and a "lovely gashdram nice person." Unfortunately, they haven't seen Whitfield since his birthday, when the Fleshtones invited 5,000 people to his house for a party. "He got a little nervous," supposes Strong.

"He got evicted," smiles Zaremba.

The Love Delegation wants to play Las Vegas. "Elvis in Las Vegas," murmurs Zaremba lovingly. "We were shooting a *Cutting Edge* in Vegas, filming a show that had impersonators of all the great rock personalities like Bobby Darin. And the fake Elvis came out and did 'CC Rider' Vegas-style with horns and everything. Two things occurred to me: Elvis was too great that even someone who poorly imitates Elvis is great. When he got on his



George DuBois

knees during the 'American Trilogy Medley,' and the laser cone descended upon him, smoke filled the stage, and Elvis froze in immortality. Bill John Wayne walked out and delivered a monologue about America." Zaremba takes a deep breath. "It was one of the greatest moments I ever had."

The second thing that occurred to him was that certain songs aren't done right, and the Love Delegation had a mission to deliver them from the Vegas viewpoint. "If only Elvis was here, we could say, 'Elvis, here's 'After Midnight,' take it away.'"

—Julie Parnesman

The Love Delegation on the way to Vegas. (L-R) Keith Strong, Ricky Rothchild, Wendy Wild, Peter Zaremba, Michael Ullman.



One of the best-kept secrets of American midwestern folklore is an East St. Louis weekly paper called *The Evening Whirl*. For 48 years the *Whirl* has composed the richest ghetto crime blotter in our history.

Its editor, Benjamin Thomas (nicknamed "the Baron" since being dubbed St. Louis's best-dressed man in the '30s), admonishes criminals in the middle of hard-news stories, often concocting poems that recommend biblical punishments involving buttock lashings. The *Whirl* delivers passionate accounts of the week's vicious rapes, shootings, and robberies, and even devotes headline coverage to beer guzzlers busted for urinating on the sidewalk. Thomas, who declines to be interviewed, considers it his civic duty to

Man Caught Making Love to Dog

embarrass the culprits of his community by printing their names in the following columns: The Hooch Hound Club (for dip-somaniacs); the Gun Club (those arrested for firing or carrying); the Sodomy Club (anyone so much as suspected of participating in the act); the Wife and Sweet-heart Unswerving Beaters Assoc.; and one for Dope Eaters and Peddlers.

Among these abundant stats are ads for the likes of Garo's fish restaurant—where the honeycomb tripe is so soft you can "leave your teeth at home"—and Dr. H. B. Woolcock, a spiritual healer from the West Indies. One month the ancient doctor's wizened face suddenly changed to that of a young Sabu type, getting rid of the "jinks" and curing women's "lost nature." Rounding out the *Whirl* are full pages of sports, St. Louis show biz, and national news for "Jews and Negroes who care to know."

Perhaps the greatest *Whirl* stories of the past decade concerned sadly unnatural love interests. The banner headline of March 29, 1983, read: "MAN CAUGHT IN

PARK MAKING LOVE TO A DOG, THEY'RE HUNG: 2 COPS SHINE FLASHLIGHT ON 'EM, SEPARATE 'EM, DOG ESCAPES." The doomed love affair of Kenneth "Dog Man" Edwards occupied the next four issues. Thomas covered the police's shock, the community's outrage, the parents' woe, and ultimately, the true love between man and beast, as described in a jail interview: "Kenneth says he found more joy in making love to Nancy [the stray dog] than he did his wife.... They would ride to the park. After kissing they would smell and lick. The car was their motel. He bought a special food for Nancy [for which he stole money] and mixed a little bourbon in.... He is protecting his beloved dog-friend and expects someday for Nancy to bear children..."

A year later, the *Whirl* topped the saga of "Dog" Man Edwards with that of "Horse Man Pruitt," a stable jockey whose huge equipment scared women away. Pruitt was arrested for "raping and sodomizing four Shetland ponies," one of whom dropped dead after he "wrecked their sex." Thomas accompanied the story with mug shots of Pruitt and a hypothetical verse lament from the Horse Man's mom:

God bless my ailing son,
I'm unhappy for what he has done;
Making love to horses is his game,
No longer can he wear the family name

Subscriptions to the *Whirl* go for \$35 per year, from P.O. Box 5088, Nagel Station, St. Louis, MO 63115. —Josh Alan Friedman

TIRED OF ROLLING STONE?

Whether it's at the Senate hearings on "porn-rock," on tour with Bruce Springsteen, or at the recording sessions for "Sun City," *Rock & Roll Confidential* not only reports the news but helps to make it. Edited by *Born to Run* author Dave Marsh, RRC is an outrageous but accurate page monthly newsletter that uses an international network of correspondents to bring our readers a wealth of information and comment on pop music. Whether the subject is payola or musical censorship, RRC pulls no punches but it's far more than a scandal sheet. We scour the country and the world for the records, videos, and music-related books and movies our music-hungry readers want to know about.

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Dorothy Low

Going Schooling

"So what the fuck do you wanna ask me? Who'd I kill? Where's my gun?" Jesse Weaver, a muscular 24-year-old tough with a square-top haircut, white tank top, white pants, and Fila sneakers, smiles as he barks out the questions. These days, Jesse does business as Schoolly-D ("We used to call playing [basket] ball 'going schooling'; don't know where the 'D' came from") and has added a new, raw dimension to rap aggressiveness: "Put my pistol up against his head/Said, 'sucka ass nigger/I should shoot you dead.'" Today's business is to lead a tour of his neighborhood, 52nd Street and Parkside in West Philadelphia, the turf that gave its name to Schoolly's loyal crew the Parkside Killers and by extension to his first single, "P.S.K.—What Does It Mean?"

"A lot of people loved it," he says of "P.S.K." as we walk past a strip of weathered-brick row houses brightened by people hanging out on the stoops. "A lot of people thought it was too violent. They think all I do is go around and stick guns in people's faces."

Do you?

"Only when I had to," he says. "All I do in my rhymes is see something over here and report it over there."

Kids call out to him as we walk up the street. "Yo, Schoolly, how you doing?" "Yo, Schoolly, when's your next record coming out?" He smiles and shakes hands. "A lot of people here helped me out," he says, pointing to an older woman who let him use the space near her store for a rehearsal area. We pass his first DJ, who looks up from fixing a bike to exchange a quick and uncomfortable greeting with Schoolly. "A lot of people here," says Schoolly, "always talked about doing a record, but they'd get high or pick up girls or get in trouble. I did it."

Schoolly credits his mother for getting him out of the world he raps about and into a school in Atlanta, where he first heard Run-D.M.C. "I thought the shit was great. When I came back I started rapping. I was terrible at first. We used to have jams on the porch. I was so bad people booed me off my own street." The jams, he says, have stopped because too many fights broke out. "There used to be

a wild crew that hung out here called the Wild Bunch. When I was little, you'd have to go through their gauntlet in order to be able to walk around. They called it the kangaroo line. Thirty guys would line up and do anything they wanted—punch you, kick you, kill you if they felt like it."

Schoolly's DJ, Code Money, walking with a cane as the result of a recent car accident, joins us, and the two run down the other gangs in the neighborhood. "You got the Bottom," says Code Money, "the Hilltop Crew, the 56th Street Gang—there's even one called the Moon Gang 6-0 in a Bucket, if you can believe that."

Schoolly stops to point out a shoe store across the street. "I worked there so I could get enough money to put out the record," he says. "Two years of stinky feet in my face." We walk in and meet the stocky gray-haired owner, who beams with fatherly pride at his former employee. "We're very proud of Jesse," he says. Outside, a couple of homeboys begin to gather around the store. They notice the photographer and a couple of members of the Parkside crew flanking the entrance. "I don't give a fuck who he is," snaps one kid. "I'll still kill him if I have to." Schoolly walks out of the store. The rival crew moves on.

"Everyone carries a gun" says Schoolly, "because you need a gun. A lot of dudes act tough because something may come down at any moment. It's like a test. I've seen a lot of dudes punk out when it comes right down to it."

What happens then?

Schoolly turns his head to watch a new group of kids gathering across the street. "The shit just keeps going on," he says. "Getting worse. I'm just trying to tell it like it is, so people know." He lowers his voice a little, revealing a trace of sadness that he doesn't allow to sneak onto his records. "I wasn't the first one to say it, and I won't be the last." We can only sit back and wait for a record called "Moon Gang 6-0 in a Bucket—What Does It Mean?"

—Scott Mehnert

Above: Schoolly-D (second from left) and DJ Code Money (far left) with friends and retainers.

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expressway to your skull

Three-fourths of Live Skull sit around ■ white Formica table in guitarist Mark C.'s immaculate, sparsely decorated East Village loft. Bassist Marnie Greenholz lights another Marlboro, smiles, and manages to look a lot less bored than she probably is. Tom Paine, the band's other guitarist, sweeps his shoulder-length dark brown hair behind his ears. "James (Lo, the drummer) should be here any minute," he says, assuringly. Lo arrives by bicycle, apologizing for being late, and the interview begins.

"Someone screams unintelligibly into a microphone," Paine deadpans, "and then the other band members have to sit there and try to figure out what he's saying. Then we write it down."

Over tribal rhythms and grating, grinding guitars, Live Skull sketches scenarios that teeter between depravity and comic-book schlock: "You know I'm coming/To wreck your life/ To tear your face off/ And drive a stake through the heart of your loved one." For all this, though, the band ain't the dirge combo it used to be. "We went through this phase of really superdense sound," says Paine. "Really thick. We're trying to keep that feel but have more things come out of it. There's more transparency. We can't understand when people say we're painting ourselves into an artistic corner. *Cloud One*



Daryl Ann Sanders

[the band's new *Homestead* LP] has ■ very definite dance sensibility—it's being fucked with all over the place, of course, but it's there."

Since forming in the fall of 1982, Live Skull has been fucking with all sorts of sensibilities. For one thing, their doom-and-gloom attitude doesn't translate into

(L-R) Tom Paine, James Lo, Mark C., Marnie Greenholz.

the black clothes, black eyeliner, and big hairdos you might expect. Dressed for this interview in jeans or shorts and polo shirts, the band—all college graduates—could be the friendly computer programmers you never knew. Onstage, Paine and Mark C. joke with the audience, and Lo smiles from behind his drums. Only Greenholz, with her tousled black hair and impassive demeanor, really looks the part. And *her* vocals are the most melodic of the bunch. So what gives with the violation, betrayal, and brutality that dominate the lyric sheet? Paine: "There's nothing wrong with singing about real things, is there?"

Mark C. grimaces at comparisons to other bands trading in these same "real things." "Instead of saying 'bands with your sound,'" he instructs, "you should say, 'bands that play to the same audiences, on the same circuit.'" The common thread is approach, "taking one's influences and twisting them inside out. But," he adds, "I don't look at music that way anymore."

Neither does Paine. "For the first time since I was thirteen, I don't have ■ record player. There are very few things going on at the moment or things from the past that I really care to listen to that much. Maybe it's just a phase."

—Sandy Smallens

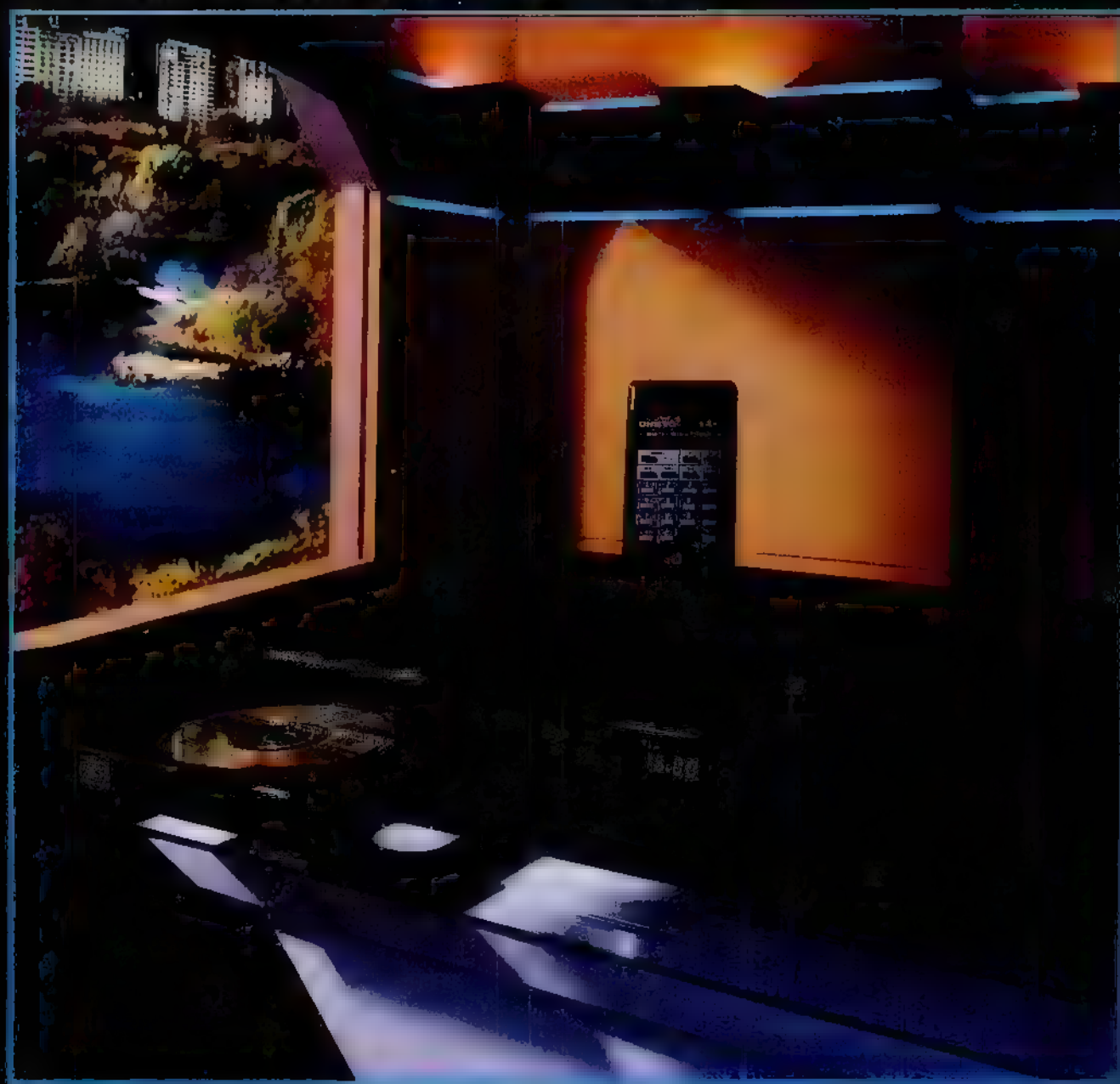
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Tony James has put an end to **vicious rumors** that premier Christian metal band Sigue Sigue Sputnik cancelled its entire UK tour merely because **nobody cared**. Playing large auditoriums, said James, went against everything the band believed in. Large **empty** auditoriums, anyway...

Janet Jackson lookalike Michael Jackson (the resemblance is pure surgical), in order to divert attention from his **incredibly famous** self, has taken to appearing in public in a wheelchair, wearing a surgical mask. This is definitely **not** to conceal his latest plastic surgery...

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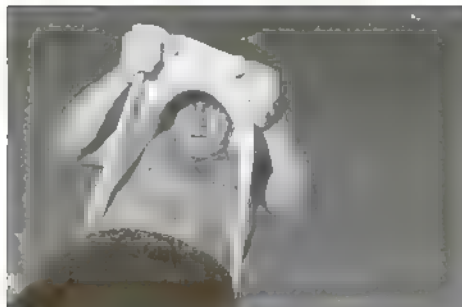
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THEY SHOOT HORSES, DON'T THEY?

Scratch Acid songs are about husbands setting wives on fire and rednecks exterminating longhairs and insects on tonight's fish dinner and humans being devoured. This is not just the newest band from Austin.

Article by Chuck Eddy
Photography by Bill Leissner



Linked up with Scratch Acid at the spot where they and every other worthwhile combo in Austin practice their noise—the soon-to-be-sold home of 24-year-old Stacey Cloud, comaginate of the band's Rabid Cat label. Took Stacey an hour or so to clean up the place, but she pulled it off, and there was enough Budweiser (Scratch Acid's drug of choice) to keep things interesting. Guitarist and military-school alumnus Brett Bradford wore his best Tall-Mans and army fatigue trousers, brought his girlfriend and brother along for the experience, talked a whole lot ("I never learned to play guitar like a guitar player, so I just play what sounds good"), and got interrupted almost as much.

Bassist Dave Sims, clad in green gym shorts and gray button-down, with hair way too long for a future CPA, at first mostly just lounged around and downed Buds. After a few, he got pretty vocal. Drummer Rey Washam showed up late, wandered in and out, looked almost as preppy as he was bored, had a smirk and blond locks worthy of Sammy Hagar, and only got excited when the conversation turned to snuff flicks. David Yow, just off work, was in what I suspect is his usual state of disarray—off-white T-shirt complete with holes, ancient jeans, hair pointing all over the room, nose pointing all over his face.

Told Scratch Acid I'd seen 'em in Detroit, and they said they'd just as soon forget that night. Back in late May, Scratch Acid had put on a show at Detroit's Graystone Bar that blew away awesome-in-their-own-right sets by Ann Arbor's Laughing Hyenas, Wisconsin's Killdozer, and our heroes' fellow Austinites, the Butthole Surfers. Nothing so unusual in that, except maybe that Scratch Acid was mostly playing numbers I hadn't heard yet, off an album that would be released a few weeks later.

What was most memorable about the performance had less to do with the songs than with the healthy contempt the flannelled or shirtless Scratch Acidheads displayed toward the slam-dancing new-wave weirdos immediately in front of the stage. Yow dared skinheads to climb the platform, then pushed

them off it two at a time, punched his way up from the throng when he was pulled down into it, and recommended castration as a means of bringing other extremities in line with the punks' hairdos.

"We're not a punk-rock band," Yow bellowed at the crowd. "Everybody has to grow up sometime." When one leather-bedecked bod aimed itself at David Sim's amplifier, he gave it a nice hard kick in a strategic spot. After the show I heard stories about a Chicago gig in which Yow was reaching into his jeans' hindquarters, grabbing handfuls of a suspicious brown substance, rubbing it on his chest, and hurling it at the audience.

Welcome to the zoo.

Scratch Acid music is an out-of-control wall of solid sonic black goop with a mind of its own. It is music that surrounds you, engulfs you, knocks you prone, violates you, forces you to stew in it and accept its stench and finally admit that it and you are one and the same. Scratch Acid music is what happens when the hardest, heaviest Led Zeppelin, the Zep of "Communication Breakdown," "Immigrant Song," and "When the Levee Breaks," has a three-truck head-on collision with Motorhead and the Pop Group, and mauled bones and tendons and organs fly everywhere; and when somebody tries to piece the parts back together, all the particulars are too shuffled around but they try anyway, and then the victims come back to life as zombie Godzillas with smelly feet and toe jam, and they stomp all over your head.

No, they don't really stomp—they tap-dance: Scratch Acid music is structured music, finessed music, music that once in a while even has pretty violin or cello or piano arrangements. But those Godzillas' feet are great big dogs made up of Bam-Bam drumbeats and roly-poly bass lines and acid-

Above: Scratch Acid (clockwise from left) David William Sims, David Yow, Rey Washam, and Brett Bradford. Left: Yow, are we having fun yet?

Told Scratch Acid I'd seen 'em in Detroit; they said they'd just as soon forget that night.

flashback guitar riffs and the nastiest old-man-of-the-woods, animal-lust yowl that will ever curl around your earlobes and send your hammers careening into your anvils; and when those Godzillas tap-dance it hurts.

Scratch Acid songs are about husbands setting wives on fire and rednecks exterminating longhairs with their four-wheel-drive pickups and insects on tonight's fish dinner and humans being devoured alive or dead or decomposed. Scratch Acid music will kill you.

Or maybe not. Because really, Scratch Acid is just four regular Joes who live in Austin, Texas, that fast-growing state capital of a college town currently suffering through the most severe marijuana drought anyone there can remember.

Bassist David Sims is a 22-year-old who cleans rich people's houses for a living and studies accounting at the University of Texas in his spare time. Drummer Rey Washam, 25, works in a copy shop, knows a lot of fancy musical things, and used to slam skins for the Big Boys and the True Believers. Guitar player Brett Bradford, 26, trims and cleans and sprays fungicide on plants during the day and is said on occasion to put too many feet in his mouth for his own good. And yowler David Yow wants everyone who can afford birthday presents to know his is in August (he turned 26), makes frijole tacos with enough meat to fill only two of the three tortilla shells he gives you in a Mexican restaurant, and is both one of the nicest people you'll ever meet and an air force brat.

"Me and Rey do the men's work, and David and Brett do the women's work," says Yow about the Scratch Acid day jobs.

To think I'd figured a southbound journey to talk to these frighteningly normal young guys would mean taking my life in my own hands and maybe never coming home. But then you'd be skeered too, if you'd seen Detroit. I decided that maybe this wasn't the best gang to spend a humid Texas afternoon with. Still, I showed up in Austin one day.

In the Rabid Cat office, which is really Stacey Cloud's house, Yow says the band doesn't really care about its audience's fashion sense, or lack thereof, as long as the audience stays where it belongs. In Detroit, it didn't.

"I don't particularly give a shit what they do, as long as my equipment doesn't get fucked up," adds Sims. "I make my living off this stuff. I can't afford to have it fucked up by some idiot."

Yow's explanation for what he calls the "shit fling" incident dealt with ingesting too much greasy fast food on the road, jumping around too much onstage, and losing control of a certain muscle. But Stacey Cloud later explained to me that Yow had been pulling my proverbial leg—the brown gunk was really a flour-and-water mixture: cookie dough. No wonder Scratch Acid calls its new album *Just Keep Eating*.

The record is the band's second. After two years of practicing, poster-making, and playing around Austin, they made their vinyl debut with an eponymous mini-LP in February 1985. (Rabid Cat wanted a full album, but the band didn't have enough songs.) *Scratch Acid* wasn't the most-praised



or biggest-selling EP released that year, but it was the best: eight bloodcurdling, mind-boggling tracks, ranging from the eerie, demi-classical haunted-house epic, "Owner's Lament," to the cluttered-house-as-metaphor-for-self-hate screech, "Mess." The record is full of primal posttribal rhythms, middle-Eastern superhero axe work, shrieks and wheezes and coughs and cackles, and the occasional sound of breaking glass. In "Cannibal" David Yow breaks into a convulsive rap about his brain and stomach and heart being eaten; in "El Espectro" he passes down the legend of a desert hobgoblin "gnawing on gringo bones"; in "She Said" he emits a victimized roar as a woman forces him to seduce her. "From life itself lies food for the worms," he philosophizes in "Greatest Gift." This is sexual frustration reduced to nihilism, spread over disembowled rock 'n' roll, coming at you like a four-by-four, car-crushing monster machine. You can't get out of the way.

Just Keep Eating, recorded last Christmas and released this July, displays a more craftsmanlike and eclectic Scratch Acid. Its centerpiece is a raucous, down-in-flames rendition of Judas's soul-for-sale *Jesus Christ Superstar* showstopper, "Damned for All Time," that may prove to be 1986's most enduring cover. There are three fairly subdued, but still quite psychotic, instrumentals. The band swaps instruments in "Holes" and veers toward jazz in "Amicus," funk in "Plug (Cheese Plug)," and industrial noise on "Spit a Kiss." The album has a few half-realized cuts—"Big Bone Lick" and "Spit a Kiss" last too long—and a blues tribute/parody called "Ain't That Love?" comes out sounding silly, despite a wonderfully chaotic guest heavy-metal solo by Offenders guitarist Tony Johnson. But Yow's lyrical bent is even more twisted than on the EP, and *Just Keep Eating* can still be counted among this year's more exciting releases.

The songs on both Scratch Acid platters detail taboo-based fears that most people are too scared to talk or even think about. Yow's lyrics delve into the ugliest, most obscene desires hidden within the human psyche. Yow denies that he's an abnormally frustrated person, but he's seen girlfriends come and go, and he writes lots of songs about being eaten, "probably because I'm frustrated about not eating enough." Otherwise, the deranged characters and



Those crazy, wacky, fun-lovin' guys of Scratch Acid hangin' around Austin style. (Left to right) Rey, David, Brett, and David.

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situations in his lyrics come from horror movies, newspapers, and everyday life: "Mess," with its "bugs on the bluefish/piss on the speaker . . . blood and juice and pubic hair," is about a house all four band members once shared; "Unlike a Baptist," about a guy named Twitch who "don't mind if ya steal all his money/Don't mind if ya gouge out his eye . . . Don't mind if ya rape his woman," is based on an Austin streetperson who "we call Twitch because his head moves around and snots fly out," says Yow; "Big Bone Lick," in which Kentucky hillbillies gun down and run over unwanted visitors, is named for an actual historical marker that nobody in the band can remember anything about.

Expect before too long a song about the following: "They use to have the pee lady here, who used to sell flowers on the street corner, and she used to carry a pillow between her legs to catch the urine, and she'd go into gas stations or McDonald's and come out with her pants turned around," Sims says.

Best Scratch Acid Live-in-Concert story has to do with Yow throwing up onstage and Bradford falling into the results. Best Scratch Acid food story is when Big Black singer and l-e-g-e-n-d mind Steve Albini "steered us to the 'best Mexican food place in Chicago,' and we swore after that we'd never eat Mexican food above the Mason-Dixon line again," Sims says. Best Scratch Acid redneck story—not exactly a song-worthy incident—concerns Yow being called a "faggot" by two Texas Neanderthals who thought he worked at the gay bookstore next to his Mexican restaurant. "If we wrote about our own lives, our songs would be boring," Yow says. Good thing these excitable boys have vivid imaginations.

Too bad more people don't hear their music. Scratch Acid mostly plays for punk crowds, and fanzines always compare them to the Birthday Party because of Yow's intense vocals and scary lyrics, but Brett Bradford says the band considers itself more hard rock than hardcore. "We don't want to play for one particular kind of people," Bradford says. "I

want to play for people who don't listen to music like they think we play." Scratch Acid's sound reflects the band's tastes: Sims likes Van Halen's first album and AC/DC's *If You Want Blood You've Got It*, and he just picked up copies of Aerosmith's *Toys in the Attic*, Led Zep's posthumous *Coda*, and a Glenn Miller greatest-hits record. Bradford thinks Peter Gabriel's "Sledgehammer" (even though the "song sucks") and Run-D.M.C.'s "Walk This Way" are the best videos on MTV, and he says his fave Zep LP is the two-disc *Physical Graffiti* because "there's twice as many good songs." Washam grooves to Jeff Beck, Brand X, and Return to Forever, and calls *Lick My Decals Off, Baby* the best Captain Beefheart album. Yow overrates *Presence*, underrates *Houses of the Holy*, and says his second favorite song on the *Jesus Christ Superstar* soundtrack is "39 Lashes." Scratch Acid has rehearsed versions of "Reuters" and "Ex Lion Tamer" off Wire's first album and "Paranoid" off Grand Funk's live LP, although "Damned for All Time" is the only song they've covered in their shows. And someday they'd like to open for Motorhead.

They've already opened for Public Image Ltd. in July. For free. But John Lydon snubbed them, they say. "I think he just likes to make money," Bradford says. "He's the ultimate hypocrite." The night had its other moments, too—PiL (sans Lydon) opened its set with an instrumental rendition of Zeppelin's "Kashmir," Lydon got mad when Butthole Surfer Gibby Hayes spat on him, the crowd enjoyed Scratch Acid's performance, and David Yow's mom showed up. "She called me the day before and told me good luck with the show, but she didn't tell me she had tickets," Yow remembers. Fortunately, no cookie dough was flung, no skinheads were punched, and Doris Yow "didn't hear any words she didn't want to hear," says her son. In fact, Mrs. Yow was impressed. "I didn't really know what to

The boys of Scratch Acid take time out to enjoy the wonders of nature. (L-R) David Yow, Rey Washam, David William Sims, Brett Bradford.

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SELL YOU
THE TAPES.



Yow's lyrics delve into the ugliest, most obscene desires hidden within the human psyche, but he denies that he's an abnormally frustrated person.

expect," she told me. "But when I saw how hard they worked, I was darn proud of my son."

Not all Austinites are so easily converted. Which is what you'd expect in a town that carries the incestuous, backslapping, back-stabbing, self-promoting nature of most local music "scenes" to an ungodly extreme. Hyped in the last year at the New Music Seminar, on MTV, and in *Newsweek* and this very publication as the most fertile rock-producing territory in America, boasting the nation's highest musician-per-capita rate, and assisted by a Chamber of Commerce pledge to support local music, the Texas capital has become a breeding ground for countless upwardly mobile yup-wave crews with more ambition than passion, their hearts set on college-radio playlists and major label contracts, their Walkmans tuned in to R.E.M. or the Replacements or the Hoodoo Gurus, and their originality quotients stuck on zero.

Bands such as Zeitgeist, the True Believers, Doctor's Mob, the Wild Seeds, and Glass Eye, ceaselessly plugged as the "New Sincerity" movement by a self-important biweekly gossip/cheerleading tabloid called *The Austin Chronicle*, are not coincidentally the town's worst offenders. Of course, any municipality that can lay claim to Joe "King" Carrasco's *Tex-Mex Rock-Roll*, Joe Ely's *Down on the Drag*, Lester Bangs and the Delinquents' *Look Savages on the Brazos*, the Butthole Surfers' *Another Man's Sac*, and the entire works of Roky Erikson dammed well better be proud of its native rockers. But you'd think the town that produced Christopher Cross would be more selective.

Austin is selective, all right—you sure won't find the jazzcore band Not for Sale, whose forthcoming *Rabid Cat* LP opens with the scene-lambasting "Nuevo Laredo Sincerity," canonized à la R.E.M.

clones Zeitgeist in the *Chronicle*. Your average Austin musical "expert" has too many friends and not enough taste.

David Sims describes Austin rock thusly: "There's millions of shitty bands." There's also a couple good ones—the guys in Scratch Acid like Not for Sale and Big Boys spin-off Cargo Cult—but "largely because of the *Chronicle*," Yow says, these bands are ignored. He claims that the *Chronicle* reviewers, who are read widely enough to channel whatever publicity Austin receives from outside, go to the same parties and belong to the same cliques as the New Sincerity bands. "A lot of the same people come see us that go see those bands," says Yow. "But the people that come see us that don't see them are smarter."

One Austin band whose national acclaim encourages Scratch Acid is the Butthole Surfers, even though, as Brett Bradford says, "I don't think we're in the same category as them," and, as David Sims says, "I don't think we're in the same tax bracket." The Surfers are famous these days, and Scratch Acid seems to be following in their footsteps. *Just Keep Eating's* success on the increasingly conservative *Rockpool* and *College Music Journal* charts is certainly worth howling at the full moon about. The band attributes its sudden popularity to the recent north-to-Minnesota and east-to-New-York tour with Killdozer (about whom, Yow says, "I love their very guts"), and they expect their August westward trek with the Buttholes to further boost their notoriety.

The mini tour will coincide with Scratch Acid's inclusion on the Touch and Go Records *God's Favorite Dog* compilation and probably will be followed by a new album sometime in 1987. Scratch Acid only has four unrecorded songs written so far, but Yow promises that "our next record is going to make you shit out your eyes."

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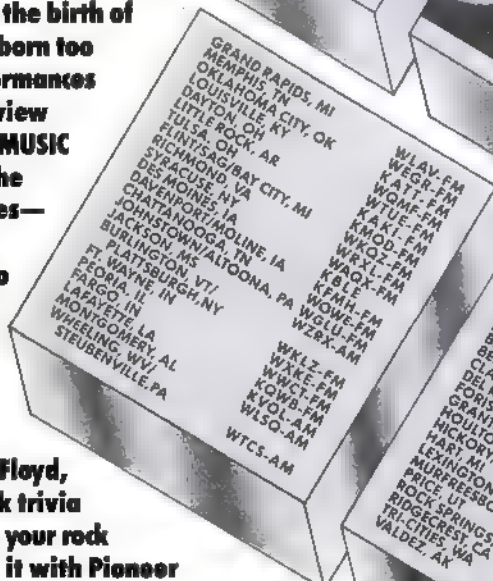
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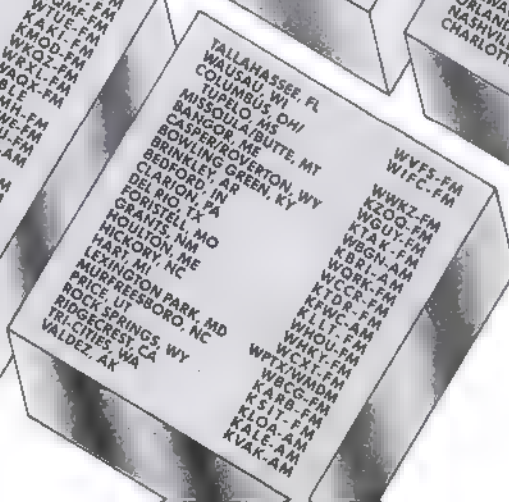
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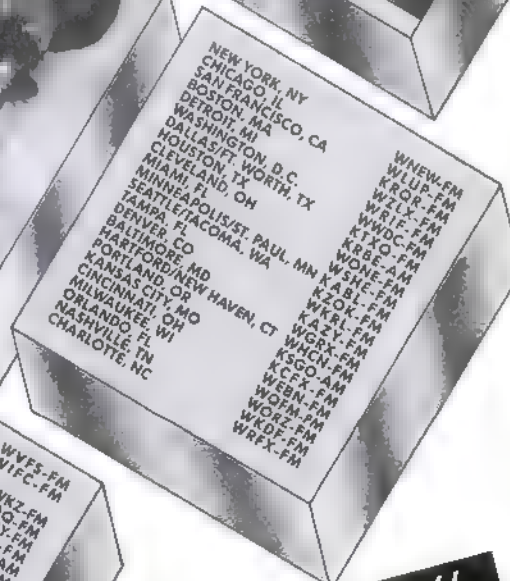
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Bob Roberts

Dylan on floppy disk. It's happening. Soon your PC will be able to cross-index every Dylan lyric and simulate a "call and response" with the man from Minnesota.¹ That's right, your Compaq Portable² becomes a Dylanized answer machine—and maybe someday there'll even be a programmed nasal voice simulator. And how about a harmonica stand that snaps on the CPU?³

The fact is, if you are really serious about Bob Dylan, you wouldn't want him on floppies—you'd only want him on read-only ROM cartridges, the hard stuff that won't disintegrate for a few hundred years. And if you really support Dylan's music, you'd only buy it on unbreakable compact discs.

Think about it. When Bob Dylan's heroes made music it ended up on easy-to-shatter pre-vinyl records. If you dropped a Hank Williams or a Leadbelly 78, that was it. But nowadays you can use your Howard Jones CD as a cutting board and still play it after dinner.

As pop music becomes more disposable, the discs become more indestructible! Based on disc indestructibility and sheer numbers of units, future anthropologists will have no other choice but to conclude that the twentieth century was an era when men with mid-to-high voices danced on the ceiling, danced with themselves, or danced in the dark.

So, if you're thinking of placing your consumer vote on a Dylan LP to send into the twenty-first century, you might want to consider *Knocked Out Loaded*. Like the human race in general, the platter is partially satisfying, occasionally brilliant, and slightly annoying. Mostly, it's a real oddity—one of those strange concoctions that will make the charts despite itself.

The spirit of the record is encapsulated in the minipus "Brownsville Girl," which Dylan co-wrote with playwright Sam Shepard. Weighing in at 11 minutes, the song is a wanderer's soliloquy—jumbled memories of driving through the Southwest with a woman, visiting the wife of a man who owned a wrecking lot, getting caught by the police, and a subsequent trial. It's a despairing Americana postcard ("even the swap meets around here are getting pretty corrupt") and the

song is overloaded with horns, but the tune is forever redeemed by the presence of Gregory Peck. That's right, at last someone had the brains to recognize the value of Gregory Peck—an actor whose world-weary eyes never betray his belief in the potential goodness of man. And a performer who, like Dylan, never wears his pride like a vanity.

In "Brownsville Girl," the narrator's mind becomes a Gregory Peck drive-in.

*Something about that movie, though
That I just can't get it out of my head
But I can't remember why I was in it
Or what part I was supposed to play
All I remember about it was Gregory Peck
And the way people moved
And a lot of them, they seemed to be
looking my way*

The story ends in the rain outside a theater.

*He's got a new one out now
I don't even know what it's about
But I'll see him in anything, so I'll stand in line*

Interesting tune but, wow, it's a full 2:52 before you hit the chorus. Good thing it's Dylan or it never would have got past the A&R department.

The choice of songs and their arrangements are offbeat. Kris Kristofferson's "They Killed Him" (a reworking of the "Abraham, Martin, and John" theme) presents the ultimate challenge to an audience's hipness—a children's choir. The Herman Parker tune "You Wanna Ramble" is a strange rhythm and blues number with some wacked guitars and lyrics that turn ugly ("For only \$1,500 you can have anybody killed"). On "Precious Memories," a traditional gospel tune, Dylan lays a reggae beat over the Nashville skyline—steel drums with steel guitar.

The remaining four songs, three originals and a collaboration with Carole Bayer Sager, are all about separation. On "Maybe Someday" Dylan advises his departed that she'll someday realize she looks better

with him than with the other guy. For pure undiluted Dylan, four lines say it all.

*You said you were going to Frisco
Stay a couple of months
I always liked San Francisco
I was there for a party once*

The last tune on the LP, "Under Your Spell," is the best, a Randy Newmanesque ballad in which Dylan is "knocked out and loaded in the naked night."

*Well, it's four in the morning
By the sound of the birds
I'm staring at your pictures
I'm hearing your words*

He "will be back" though, and he "will survive." "You will never get rid of me," he warns, "as long as you're alive." But even with this positive outlook, something is gnawing at Bob as the song ends:

*Well, the desert is hot
The mountain is cursed
Pray that I don't die of thirst
Baby, two feet from the well*

Great song, but what if he got to the well and the vandals took the handle? I'm not sure about the answer to that one, and if it's not programmed onto the floppy, I guess we'll have to wait until Bob gets back to us.

—Rich Stim

1. A program called "Rockware: Dylan" is available for \$20 from Thunderstone, P.O. Box 839, Chesterland, OH 44026.
2. One of several IBM PC clones.
3. Or "central processing unit"—the brains of the computer.

Above: The voice of a generation.



Karen Filmer



David Lee Roth
Eat 'Em and Smile
Warner Brothers

This is like 6:30 in the morning in the Age of Aquarius. The cosmic lawn mower just woke me up, and it looks like, hey, it's a whole new age. It's about time, if you ask me. The last two thousand years were a stone drag.

Like, if you missed the actual dawning of the Age of Aquarius, it was fairly intense. I was up for it, and then I went back to sleep. The colors were manic, and the music was righteous, and I was, like, getting incredible visuals, but these chicks in, like, ponchos and fringe with hair under their arms, like, wake me when it's over, OK?

Anyhow, things seem to be really getting cool now and there's a whole new set of role models—or, like, role spokes-models—that are demonstrating to the Head and Shoulders-using, Members Only-wearing masses what this new kind of love, peace, consumer nirvana, and lots of yucks is all about.

That's why David Lee Roth, or Dave, as I call him, is my man. Dave took that whole rock 'n' roll thing that got so big so

soon, like maybe too soon, and put into it the same kind of perspective and excellence and desire and good taste and humor and excitement that you find in a sushi bar packed with sake-swilling Ford, Wilhelmina, Zoli, and Click models and Jay Leno.

I dug Van Halen moderately, but I figured that the main asset there was the guy with the wig-hat-like do and the tights of many colors. I dig Eddie as guitar player and Bertinelli squeeze, but without Dave this would no longer be the world's most holistic metal band. (Sammy Hagar? Pass the Tylenols, Betty.) Of course there were those naysayers who were expecting the guy to fall on his face. But the thing about this man is that when he falls on his face it's in the spirit of, like, Shemp trapped in the body of Ron Ely.

Anyhow, all those Dave pooh-poo-hers are going to have to eat their poo-poo when they hear this album, *Eat 'Em and Smile*, because this is, like, the fulfillment of what Van Halen was only deafeningly hinting at.

So I was reading the *New York Post* the other morning, Sean Penn punching somebody, four Mets arrested in a Houston bar, 200,000 people moved farther away from Chernobyl, the usual stuff, and I see this review by this guy named Chin of the Dave album and I can tell he likes it, but it's like he thinks Dave is, like, insincere or ironic or campy compared to other big hard-rockers and that this in some way detracts from the music. In fact, Dave is probably the most sincere and straightforward costume rocker in the business. That's why he's so funny. It's all on purpose. It's wit. Most of his competitors are more funny than they know about. That's camp. As for sincerity, Dave is totally sincere, though in a style you might call Sincere Lite.

Dave doesn't condescend to heavy-

metal conventions; he lovingly embraces them and gives them some transcendental meditation. The result is a sort of Spinal Tap of the Gods.

There's no conflict of interest between a great sense of humor and great music. Fletcher Henderson, swing's greatest arranger, loved doing tunes like "Knock, Knock" (who's there?) and Betty Boop cartoony stuff. And then you got your Louis Primas, your Cab Calloways, your Louis Armstrongs, your Ray Charles ("Makin' Whoopee!"). So you got your Dave doing "Yankee Rose," "I'm Easy," and all that.

Steve Vai can play guitar with nerve and intensity, like old Eddie, but when he's backing Dave he also makes his tool banter and schmooze and perform cartwheels, and he has no compunctions about pushing the outside of the envelope and taking it totally over the top into the no-man's land somewhere between Jimmy Page and Wiley Coyote.

This is a lollapalooza of a band, performing excitingly in all of Dave's areas of interest, from rotorooter speed metal to jump blues to Sinatraland to hefty mental and back.

And not only does D.L.R. have a voice that oozes character and performs caricature with virtuosity, the guy is a tuned-in tunesmith as well, and when I'm in my ride with my squeeze on the freeway of love there's nothing I'd rather hear than a selection that includes the alarmingly cool "Ladies Night in Buffalo"; the tortuous, expeditious, and personable "Shyboy"; the natty cover "Tobacco Road"; my theme song "I'm Easy"; and the heart, soul, and whoopee cushion of the classic "That's Life."

Brothers and sisters: Yo, enjoy!

—Roger Egbert. Translated from the Latin
by Glenn O'Brien.



The Screaming Blue Messiahs
Gun Shy
Elektra

What's this with the bald-headed guys? First it was Mr. Clean, then Isaac Hayes, then Tony Levin, then Richie Häss, then that geek in Midnight Oil, and now this guy in the Screaming Blue Messiahs. On the back cover he looks suspiciously similar to Divine immediately before she was electrocuted in *Female Trouble*. What gives? Is chemotherapy becoming more prevalent, or is running the chrome dome the latest fashion dictate that we'll all

soon be forced to emulate? Could you imagine what would happen if Madonna doffed her locks and opted for the naked cueball look? It would result in a nation of lemminglike teenage girls walking around like zombie clones of the late, great Yul Brynner. Fantastic!

Perhaps featuring a freaky-looking baldie on a record jacket is designed to catch your attention for a moment—the moment that you decide to buy it. Speculation about cynical marketing ploys aside, *Gun Shy* is a damn fine record. Consisting of a quasi-neo-rockabilly power trio with admittedly limited timbral resources, the Screaming Blue Messiahs squeeze a lot of great music out of guitar, bass, drums, and vocals. "Wild Blue Yonder" begins with a simple but catchy guitar riff, adding an incessant shaker, and plunging into a damn fine, funky, kickass rock song that'll induce even nondancers to want to move their bodies. The lyrics seem nebulous and open to interpretation: "Now that all that killing's done/Dance to the good cash money, son/I don't know, but I believe/Country air is the only air that's fit to breathe/And I can't see that star/And I can't hear that thunder/I wonder how long it'll be/Out in the wild blue yonder." Mediocre philosophy? Gentle metaphysical musings? It doesn't matter, as the popping drums and loping bass and guitar lines propel the listener on a nonlinear groove into funky travel movements of rubber-band astral projection.

"Talking Doll" blasts off the start of the second side with a propulsive, aggressive energy that bites ya on the ass. Vocalist Bill Carter, the baldie, rails "kill the lights, kill the lights" while an exciting thumping bass line bounds along in constant motion—and then it's finished after two minutes and forty seconds. Damn! This would have made a great 20-minute jam, filling the grooves on side two with constant forward motion. Although the lyric content leaves a lot to be desired, the music to "Talking Doll" is a frenetic musical speed trip that leaves the listener slobbering for more. Producer Howard Gray is to be highly commended for this track.

Churning, chunky guitar vibrates, shakes, mixes, and thrusts "Twin Cadillac Valentine" into another drive/speed/movement/travel groove. "Stoned love is what we got/When it's hot, it's hot"—again, nothing earth-shattering in the word department, but great echoing shards of guitar float in the interludes while Kenny Harris's drums bound and bounce like a stampede of PCP-crazed elephants. Somebody open the cage, 'cause the monkey's bustin' loose.

How to describe this music? Partly rockabilly, partly power trio, parts of the Stones and Hendrix—the best parts—thrown into a smoking stew of rock 'n' roll slingshot space trip. Constant speed, constant boogie, constant motion, constant obsessive movement. This record makes an excellent dance set—you could play this disc uninterruptedly all night at a dance club, keep folks thrashing away on the dance floor, and not get any complaints. A dance record even for those who can't dance. Bite my ass again, 'cause the monkey's bustin' loose.

—John Trubee



John Bourgeois



The Nails
Dangerous Dreams
RCA

The Nails' ambitious second album, *Dangerous Dreams*, walks a fine line between street smart and downtown smug, winding up on the smart side. Singer and resident poet, Marc Campbell, emulates the more declamatory verse-slinging style of Patti Smith, Jims Carroll and Morrison, and David Meltzer (circa *Serpent Power*). Fortunately, the rest of the Nails swing like mad and never let him veer too far toward "Horse Latitudes." When he starts climbing his mountains, they start behaving like a rock band, bellowing and clanging, and he's forced to climb down and start behaving like a singer.

Campbell is an inventive writer and comes up with startling lines ("The gossip of God hangs in the air" and "I can hear the voice/It's just out of reach/Like the song from between/The moon's white teeth"), though the lines are often stronger out of context, as random thoughts, than as part of a larger whole. When Campbell tries to fit the entire world into one song, replete with demons and angels and Joan of Arc and the seven deadly sins, he grows tongue-tied and begins posturing, showing off with language. Saying everything, he winds up saying nothing. But when he relaxes, he can write lovely and touching songs. "Hello Janine," the simplest and most understated piece on the record, is by far the most moving, recalling John Cale around the time of *Helen of Troy*.

Producer Pete Solley has opened up

the Nails' sound, giving them more room, more space and keeping Campbell's voice mixed within the confines of the band. At their best, in "Dangerous Dreams" and "Dig Myself a Hole," they recall the Stranglers and the Psychedelic Furs. When they're not at their best, however, they can sound like a competent backup band thrown together for a session.

Still, mistakes, posturings, and all, Marc Campbell is almost always literate, witty, and intelligent, and when the band is really playing and the melody is there, and when Campbell stops looking over his shoulder to see who is watching, when he forgets to recite and starts to sing, then all is forgiven. Then the poem rises above itself and becomes a song.

—Brian Cullman

the Feelies



The Good Earth

The Feelies
The Good Earth
Coyote

There were these two guys who lived at a drug dealers commune in western Idaho in the early '70s. One was named Ace, one was named Kip, and their drug of choice was an extremely nasty acid that came in orange barrels. These barrels were cut with so much crap that the corners of your mouth would twitch for three days after you ate 'em, and Ace used to laugh that the weird energy he got from the strychnine was the best part of the high. Anyhow, these guys had a totemic

item they called the "Rabbit Mandala". It was a square piece of white pine that was covered with smudged red concentric circles, and they'd made it one night by nailing a rabbit's hind leg to the board and letting him run himself out. They kept the board in the trunk of Ace's Plymouth and both of them swore that it was the most beautiful thing to stare at while you were tripping. I could acknowledge that it sure did look like a real, uh, interesting and, uh, real subtly varied piece of work, but examining it at length was not a compelling prospect.

My feelings about the Feelies' last six years of history run along the same lines.

Crazy Rhythms is the archetypal slab of modern guitar pop. As such, it is still eminently listenable long after many bands (e.g., Mission of Burma, R.E.M., ad infinitum) made all sorta extrapolations from its procedural theses. After its release, however, the Feelies seemed to follow their man Eno into the belly of a whale called "ambience." New "songs" became nothing more than one shimmering tremoloed chord and many fans gave up all hope of ever getting anything else. Starting a couple of years ago, though, things seemed to be getting more structured again. This very fine album is the culmination of the Feelies' journey back

to more traditional rock structure.

The songs on *The Good Earth* are so easily accessible that I'm not sure if they'll hang in there the way their more obtuse forebears did, but there's no denying their excellence. The Feelies take some of the second generation moves that their spawn came up with and apply 'em to the original source. And you'd certainly never mistake that Mercer/Million guitar singularity for anybody else, and there are spots here where the boys jack themselves up in a way they haven't since early live dates. Stuff like "Slipping (Into Something)" has enough Velvetoid punk (yeah, punk) stringwork that Ace and Kip would probably get turned off by it. Fuck 'em. This is nibs.

—Byron Coley

Opposite: The David Lee Roth Band (L—R) Billy Sheehan, himself, Gregg Bissonette, Steve Vai. Top left: The Nails (clockwise from left) David Kaufman, George Kaufman, Mike Ratti, Steve O'Rourke, Douglas Guthrie, Marc Campbell. Right: The Feelies. (L—R) Brenda Sauter, Stan Demeski, Bill Million, Dave Weckerman, Glen Mercer.



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xZSD



R.E.M.
Lifes Rich Pageant
I.R.S.

This record is pretty much what you'd expect. The big news is that R.E.M. used John Cougar Mellencamp's producer. This caused Natalie Merchant of 10,000 Maniacs to fear that R.E.M. would be making a "heavy metal" record. "Begin the Begin," first on the "dinner" side (as opposed to the "supper side"—ain't that cute?) rocks right out, with a snare sound that pops like a firecracker, the rhythm guitar packs lead. R.E.M.'s big move to high-tech production leaves a big new problem that they have yet to solve. Now that we can understand the lyrics, we still can't understand them. In "Begin the Begin" (roll over, Benny Goodman) Michael Stipe sings "I can't even rhyme" in false modesty; nonetheless it's true.

"We are the world, and everyone is the world, but who needs to be told that?" Mike Mills asked me last year in Athens, Georgia. Something tells you that part of R.E.M. isn't confused about its purpose, but that part is not Stipe. He wrote to his flock in "These Days": "All the people

gathered here . . . we are young despite the years/We are concerned, we are hope despite the time." What a strange burden it must be to be Michael Stipe these days, middle America's nouveau-hippy art-school urchin turning up regularly at your doorstep to spend his nights on your couch, his days in your garden picking berries in futile attempts to manufacture natural hair dye.

Six years ago you started a band with the best intentions. It would be a startling leap to fuse '60s folk rock with a Rough Trade understanding of amateurism. It would be naive music, original by virtue of an impressionistic mystique you would concoct scouring the South, where you were a newcomer at age 18, for symbolism. After punk, we were tired of degradation. We needed grand and noble gestures, earnestness, a Cause. We needed to be on the R.E.M. fan-club mailing list for Greenpeace fliers and your dream diaries. We needed vegetarianism. Especially if, like you, we were raised Protestant.

Now that R.E.M. have become the Beatles of college radio, they're gracious enough on *Lifes Rich Pageant* to provide progressive, although sometimes overly stylized, musical adventures. "Underneath the Bunker" is a flamenco. The most successful experiment is allowing Mills to sing lead on "Superman," a cover of a song by '60s group the Clique. This song is about a man who's discovered his girlfriend is having an affair with someone else. It's a POP song with hooks, a punchy organ part, and what a relief it is following the murky depths of obscurity on (you figure it out) "Swan Swan H." Mills's pipes sound great on the staccato accents that buoy the nonchorus of "Just a Touch." His voice and sensibility focus the band more than we have perceived.

Maybe it is the critics' fault for coddling this group. They led them into maturity without an ounce of healthy self-doubt. The freshmen at the University of R.E.M. were holy defenders of their school spirit, that soft-focus, Pre-Raphaelite, dance-barefoot-in-the-kudzu utopian vision. *Murmur* demanded that. It was intoxicating. But soon that class will graduate to the real adult world, where self-righteous rock bands lie that they are Superman, that they can do anything, even preserve our faith in romance. So when they serve the commencement spoonbread, you can have my piece of *Lifes Rich Pageant*. I'm on a diet.

—Sue Cummings



Peter Dinklage and the Bottlecaps
Peter Dinklage and the Bottlecaps
Rouander

While at least one of this magazine's editors was being shunted to the beach in utero, Peter Dinklage was singing about

the joys of the "psychedelic blues." The year was 1963, the song was "Hesitation Blues," the band was the Holy Modal Rounders. In the intervening years, Dinklage has been of consistent interest to the small army of hopheads who knew of his existence. Whether serving as the musical firepole down which the Fugs slid, introducing songwriters like Mike Hurley to the non-general public, or leading a series of Rounders (both Holy Modal and Unholy), Dinklage was always right there. He never failed to spray his followers with a postdrug kind of hillbilly sputum that he took in as a mouthful of musical clichés and spit out as a whining ball of bees that stung you in all the right places.

Anyhow, Dinklage's band for the last five years has been the Bottlecaps. Currently a sextet, the Bottlecaps know far, far, far more songs than would seem likely. They can play sets in which the Legendary Masked Surfers' "Gonna Hustle You" leads into Richard Thompson's "Wall of Death," which butts into Gene Pitney's "Man Who Shot Liberty Valance," which sets off a string of originals, and they make it all sound as fine as a squirrel drinking beer. This is not to infer that they're any sorta mere bar band, however. Just as the Rounders transcended the "mereness" confines of après-drug-trad-stomp, so the Bottlecaps and their first record sail over the goofy good-time neo-bar-band fence that appears to be stretched around their chosen turf.

Admittedly, there are also a couple tracks here I could live without, but these failures exist because Dinklage is attempting to devour the entire universe, and it simply can't be done. The lapses are forgivable, and songs like the Roundersish "Random Violence" or the sweetly forlorn "Everything Must Go" can sit with almost anything from Dinklage's. There are few accolades higher than that.

More than the Blasters or George Jones or even the Standells, these songs are my roots. And I like 'em a lot.

—Byron Coley

Top: R.E.M. (L-R) Mike Mills, Bill Berry, Peter Buck, and Michael Stipe.
Below: Head Bottlecap Peter Dinklage.





Richard Thompson
Daring Adventure
PolyGram

There are two schools of thought about Richard Thompson (there may be more, but in the interest of time let's just deal with two). The first holds that Thompson is a brilliant songwriter in a sort of English folk-rock mode who also happens to be a

fine guitarist. The second school says that he's a conventional songwriter whose records just kill time until the brilliant guitar solos. The first school thinks it's criminal that Thompson is not richer and more famous than he is. The second school says he's not on a commercial par with, say, Bruce, because his songwriting has been a little thin lately.

As usual, when you set up a false dichotomy like that, there's merit on both

sides. Richard Thompson is a great songwriter when he wants to be. He is the most interesting white guitar player of his generation. His songs have been a little thin lately.

Daring Adventure finds our hero about where we left him last time: alternately cursing and mourning the state of modern love and society. Not unreasonable reactions, but maybe a little tired as subject matter this late in the 20th century. Thompson's saving grace (apart from his guitar) is his melancholy voice and his delightfully vehement bitterness.

A few tunes here may be directed at Thompson's ex-wife and former collaborator, Linda, dealing as they do with "how you let me down" and visits to "the grave of our love." Having mapped out that territory pretty well on his last three records, Thompson is more compelling when he's pissed off in a more generalized context, like on "A Bone Through Her Nose," a snotty putdown of trendy nightclubgoers. Like shooting fish in a barrel? Maybe, but Thompson's got the caricature about right: His heroine has a boyfriend who "plays in Scritti Politti," and her wardrobe is provided by "her personal friend, Coco the clown." These are mean cheap shots, pleasures by definition in my book.

An indication that Thompson may be treading water as a songwriter is "Dead Man's Handle," which sounds like a rewrite of one of his masterpieces, "Wall of Death," from 1982's *Shoot Out the Lights*. Both tunes will remind the listener

of Bob Dylan circa *Highway 61*, and both find metaphors for life in large, dangerous, mechanical objects that go too fast. This line of reasoning is consistent with Thompson's Islam-derived philosophy, which sees our corporeal existence as largely a case of trying to make the best of a situation that could not possibly be worse. Wanna dance?

In the midst of all this is Thompson's guitar playing, a thing of angular and occasionally atonal beauty that makes a cliché-ridden joke of most rock guitar heroics. Thompson may be coasting on his playing, but what coasting.

Happily, one new tune, "Al Bowlly's in Heaven," is as good as its guitar solo. The song is an old soldier's reverie about how easy it was to get girls when he was walking around London in uniform. The lyric contrasts the protagonist's current bum existence with the days when he had "a blonde on the arm, redhead to spare/Spit on their shoes and shine in their hair." The arrangement is a fake-jazz affair with string bass, horns, and vibes. The guitar solo is acoustic, recalls Django Reinhardt, and is much too short.

Richard Thompson on a bad day is better than most any other guitarist (or songwriter, for that matter) on his best. Thompson's been better, but he's still got it in both departments.

—Peter Carbonara

Above left: Richard Thompson—guitar hero, swell guy.

Sony just extended the range of





Madonna
True Blue
Sire

Over the last three years of her supersonic ascension to superstardom, we have watched Madonna transform herself from a disco-waif punk who embodied a fresh and feisty nonapologetic sexuality, to a coy boy-toy, to a serious actress/singer, an

elegant punk Marilyn Monroe. Like a cobra basking in the hot sun, Madonna on the cover of her new album stretches her profile lasciviously.

And after all this image manipulation, the album *True Blue* very cleverly reflects and exploits her many personas. There is something here for everyone: the girlies, the adults, and the discophiles. At 27, Madonna knows her days as the chanteuse for teenage romance are num-

bered. With perfect timing, Madonna has gently distanced herself from the role, and although some of the songs on *True Blue* have the sophistication of a training bra, there are glowing moments.

The album opens with the obvious hit, "Papa Don't Preach," a mainline fix for the kiddies. With its urgent strings, catchy, pleading chorus, and controversial content, it's the album's "Like a Virgin." Like a battle cry, this teenage baby defiantly proclaims, "Papa don't preach/ I'm in trouble deep/But I've made up my mind/I'm going to keep my baby." A realistic portrait of a young girl's predicament, it's Madonna's most sophisticated song, but like "Like a Virgin" it's perverse. Whereas "Like a Virgin" was a mirror for the culture's sexual schizophrenia, romanticizing and ultimately reinforcing sexual conservatism, "Papa Don't Preach" is an unusual look at teenage pregnancy. Madonna has taken teenagers from virginity to motherhood. Her next hit may deal with packing school lunches.

In more neutral territory, there's the appealing "I'm going to get you" song "Open Your Heart." In her determined way, Madonna flutters, "I'm used to working much harder than this for something I want/Don't try to resist/Open your heart to me." Dressed in shimmering sounds and pounding drums, the production effectively creates the expansive feel of something magically opening. But the two glowing moments on *True Blue* are "White Heat" and "Live to Tell." "White

Heat"'s hard edge and wonderfully syncopated rhythms propel the clever lyrics. With James Cagney as mentor, Madonna's a tough love-buster putting her man's immaturity to the wall. In her most husky womanly voice, Madonna declares, "I don't want to live out your fantasy/Love's not that easy/My love is dangerous/This is a bust." In striking contrast, "Live to Tell" is dark and moody, dense with dramatic mystery. In this mushy tale of lost innocence, Madonna very theatrically conveys a dreamy fatalism. Her fragile vocals ache for reassurance and healing when she sings, "Will it grow cold/The secret that I hide/ Will I grow old?"

"True Blue" and "Jimmy Jimmy" are the cute retro throwaways. Tributes to the girl groups of the '60s, they exude innocence and harmony. Love is as simple as the lyrics, "True blue/I love you." The finale, "Love Makes the World Go 'Round," never generates a genuine musical moment to coincide with its anthemlike lyrics: "It's easy to forget/If you hear the sound of pain and prejudice.../Love makes the world go 'round."

The album *True Blue* is Madonna's rite of passage between pop adolescence and a harsher adult world. With all her contrivances and the delightful tunes that I can't exorcise from my head, her mystique is still explained by the young beefcake who told me, "I love to pump iron to Madonna."

—Erica Wexler

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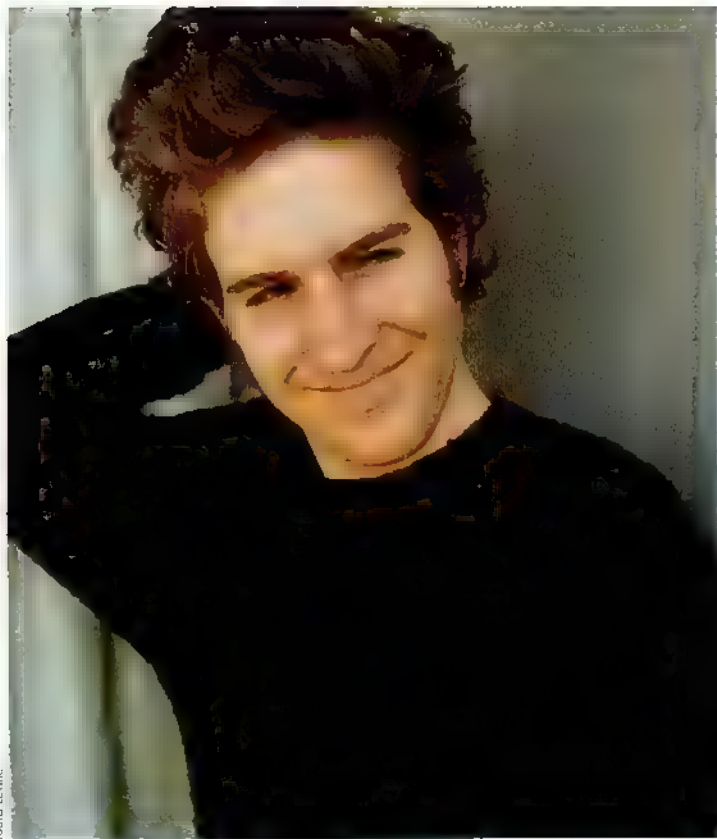
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Laura Levine



The Dream Syndicate Out of the Grey Big Time

Datum of primary importance: This is the first Dream Syndicate album for which spot-the-influence isn't the first priority in the listener's mind. (Never mind the line "Exile on Vine Street" scratched on an inner groove. Obviously, some private joke.)

On yet another new label, and without guitarist Karl Precoda, Syndicate head Steve Wynn has abandoned the neo-psychedelic son of "Sister Ray" jams that marked previous records. His subject matter is less different: Wynn has always dealt in various metaphorical expressions of the danger zone, the border area where the most dreaded thing starts becoming reality. The song "50 in a 25 Zone" here is not, needless to say, about speeding. Not literally, anyway. (And

"Boston" isn't about Boston.)

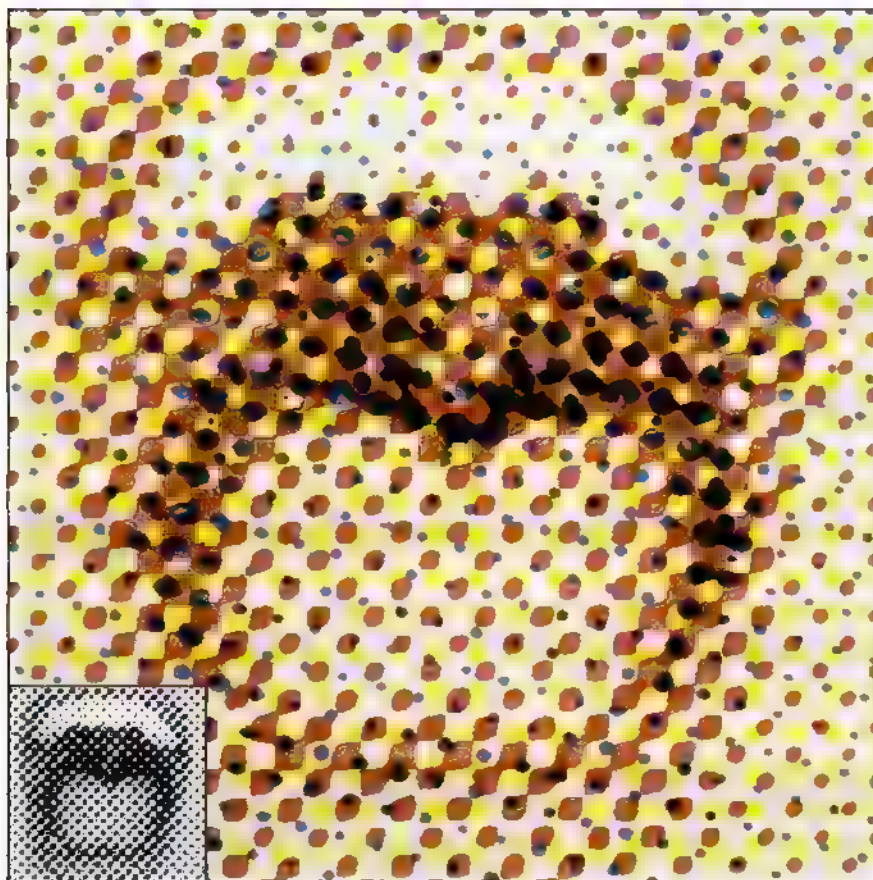
His main theme is still the circumstances that push ordinary folk to criminal action, the creation of outlaws during a Sunday drive—which in Wynn's universe can happen with the approximate odds of a coin coming up heads. Big plans gone out of control. Murder lurking around the next curve. Head and hands found: film at 11.

So the self-conscious noise overdrives are gone, in favor of focusing on the story lines (but what stories they are), strong melodies, and graceful song construction. Wynn tries on the world-weary jeans and scuffed brown boots of the prairie poet, his cowboy mouth matching the band's plucking away like desperado Del Fuegos or Long Ryders. It's a controlled mania.

You shouldn't complain. Wynn has interesting tales to tell and tells them intelligently, without condescension. Stories about survival, burnouts, and damaged goods. The awareness of the red area cuts across a spectrum of styles, from the hard-driving "Dancing Blind" to "Now I Ride Alone," a mournful freeze-frame in the life of a recent widower. When you're in that red zone you can easily roll screaming off the edge, but sometimes, by chance, you get saved.

—Wes Eichenwald

Left: The Dream Syndicate's Steve Wynn.



THE BANDS THAT ATE NEW YORK

WHOLE WERE WORLD THE BABY FLIES H STEVE MOORE THE BETTER BOYS RACING SLAM
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BAMBARA COHEN AND THE PASSIONS JOE HAMPTON JANE YOUNG JOHN

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UNDERGROUND



Andy Fiebert

Mofungo has been scuttling around New York City's subways and subterranean scene for seven years now, creating sonic shears of no-wave noise and avant excursions in mutant jazz. Until the release of *Messenger Dogs of the Gods*, the band had never dabbled in pop. Mofungo's idea of pop still wouldn't fool a Bangles fan. It's not simpleminded or simple sounding. Even when Mofungo tackles melodic nonsense syllables, the attempt is delivered with an alienated tonality.

Messenger Dogs is an exotic album, featuring complicated tropical

percussion coupled with the kind of amelodic singing that the 1977 wave brought to rock. "Toomus Meremereh" (which spells Heremereh Sumoot backwards on your Yma Sumac decoder ring) is a gentle song, full of "na-na"s, a slowly banged drum, a clanking pot, and what sounds like two knives attempting to scratch an itch on each other's blades. Most of all, it's accessible (which is a rock-crit term that means you don't need listening lessons to figure out what to like).

"No Pasaran" (Spanish for "they shall not pass") couples a strummed guitar with Elliot Sharp's tiny, giggling saxophone fountains and a warpedly sweeping style of guitar playing, while

"Johnny Didn't Come Marching Home" stops and starts at every verse like a jack-in-the-box. You know they're out to surprise you, but you never know when they will. In a minute and forty-one seconds, "Johnny" tells the story of one American soldier. The ending is as cold as the soldier's corpse. Mofungo has always had a sociopolitical bent, but *Messenger Dogs* stays away from proselytizing about specific events and views. After "Pasaran" comes "Deportee." A tune about Mexican illegals, with delicate fingered drum beats and hard-strummed Spanish guitar, it too has a universal humanness that stretches beyond political ideology. "Deportee" sounds like a reference to the KKK's recent offer to help out immigration officers on the US/Mexican border, but it isn't—it was written by Woody Guthrie (who died 19 years before *Messenger Dogs*' release).

Mofungo's early records asked how far one could venture into furiously energized dissonance before music became noise. They're not backing off from their mission to take music into the future; they're just giving it a listenable form. The result makes *Messenger Dogs of the Gods* the album to meet Mofungo on. You can find Mofungo care of Lost Records, 361 Canal Street, New York, NY 10013.

"Look out, it's another wipeout," screams one of the *Walking Seeds* in a voice so heavily flanged it sounds like an android shouting through a 20-mile sewer pipe. While Mofungo tested the waters between music and noise, the Seeds didn't bother. They just jumped in throat first and came out screaming in great, hollow terror swaths.

Listening to the Seeds' music is like drinking a gallon of battery acid. Their sound is rough and raw. Simple melodies. Not much harmony (unless you count the screaming-meemie siren of a child's toy ray gun or the screeching squeals of a lone whistler whose pucker sounds like drill-press shavings) wedged against the band's dense scrapings of guitar. On their 12-inch EP, "Know Too Much," rhythm is everything. The guitars are played for rhythm, and the drums pound. Lifting like a rhinoceros, the Seeds have a heavy sound. "Huge Living Creature" is a fuzz-encrusted horror show set to the band's minimalist rasp and grate.

"Tantric Wipeout" has a trace of Farfisa-style keyboard, evoking memories of the cheap electric organs that perked and brooded through the mod era. The *Walking Seeds* also use tape loops, such as one of a police radio that babbles over a riff so low it sounds like every tweeter on the planet has been blown. The end result is mutantly pop. They've done everything a pop band does. Hidden below all their abrasions is a kernel of familiarity, which is what pop is. You can get hold of the Seeds through Probe Plus, 8-12 Rainford Gardens, Liverpool, England. They enter the US through the British export firm Cartel.

It's almost always easier and cheaper to get a store in your area to order

foreign records than to import one copy for yourself. All of the records in this column can be ordered by your local record store.

To a visitor from Mars, the *Bats* could pass for a mod revival band, with their simple, light style and songy tunes. They've got alternating refrains and verses, and you can even make out all the words without a lyric sheet if you try. The *Bats* follow many of pop's age-old traditions. They even have a love song on their album "and here is 'Music for the Fireside'." But when the line "and I'm so tasteless I like you" starts repeating, you realize that this love song won't get played a lot on Valentine's Day.

The *Bats* are not the run-of-the-mill musical mammal. Ordinary bands don't tackle their bass with a bow for a seesawing, slithering sound the way the *Bats* do on "Chicken Bird Run," and you can hum an ordinary band's tunes after they're done. You can hum a few *Bats* songs if you're extremely diligent, but there's something about their melodies that makes it damn difficult. Their basic sound is crisp, clear guitar strumming aided by gutsily sawed violin and acoustic bass. Over that fall the vocals, which have their roots in the brash aharmonics that evolved after punk. Streaky and stressed, they're just a hair off-kilter, like everything else with this band. "Offside" tinkles with its acoustic-sounding guitar and plinked strings as Robert Scott adds his lone and alienated voice, a postpunk answer to Paul Simon, weaving "sensitive" poetics out of loneliness without much regard to traditional pop tonality.

Pop is sweet, and there's something sweet about the *Bats*. What keeps that sweetness bearable is the band's roughness. One speck of polish would turn their sound to mush, but their music's not about polish and slickness. Even when they rock hard, their sound is like used cardboard: soft, rough around the edges, and very plain. You can find them through the plain-pop label Flying Nun, P.O. Box 3000, Christchurch, New Zealand.

The all-female band *Look Blue Go Purple* doesn't look like the Ronettes or sound like the Go-Gos. Norma O'Malley plays smoothly shifting Farfisa-style keyboard chords and blows delicate twists of flute. Kath Webster and Denise Roughan coax galloping spaghetti surf and gentle, jangly notes from their guitars, while Kathy Bull strokes bass. Lesley Paris's drumming is delicate but secure, disappearing when it's not needed, resurfacing with a syncopated beat, then tapping like a Native American tom-tom. In "Vain Hopes." Together they make pretty music, shimmeringly angelic and couched in folk, loaded with melody and harmony and all those other sweet

Mofungo plotting the overthrow of the world as we know it: (L-R) Willie Klein, Chris Nelson, and Robert Sielasma.

Behind Look Green Go Purple's softness is an engagingly homespun roughness that keeps their choirlike vocal harmonies and lilting melodies from turning rancid.



and familiar aspects that make pop-infused rock an ear magnet. There's plenty of echo in their vocals, and their sound is gentle and clean, but behind the softness is an engagingly homespun roughness that keeps their choirlike vocal harmonies and lilting melodies from turning rancid. Import stores in your area can acquire their 12-inch EP, "Bewitched," from the distribution arm of US Rough Trade, or you can get it directly from Flying Nun Records, P.O. Box 3000, Christchurch, New Zealand.

When elephants boing like a countrified rubber band and racing hearts pop, you're in *Bird Nest Roys* territory, a world that features mystical middle-eastern slinks one moment, then descends to the darkest metronome pit the next. Never mind that their tales of Boy Scout badges, scrunched-up faces, and wombat stones make no sense; their sweet, spare guitar style needs no explanation. Clear and clean as if it

were acoustic—though their sound is fully electrified—that guitar runs through mod-edged surfisms and jingly-strummed janglies throughout their EP, "Whack It All Down."

"Batcave" grates with deep and groaning streaks while the bass beats the rhythm, drum-steady with a tune. "Cresta" shimmers under its harmonic vocals, a pretty track without lush goopiness or overproduced grandeur. The Roys build their fine-feathered sound like a bird's nest—from very simple, easy-to-obtain scraps—and bring it to the world through Flying Nun, P.O. Box 3000, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Listening to *Jowe Head's Strawberry Deutsche Mark* is like listening to old Top 40, '60s soul, and doo-wop records spliced on top of each other and played back at 29 3/4 instead of 33 1/3. They use soul-singer falsetto and doo-wop harmony, imitation disco-oid rhythm box, and parody to create their songs.



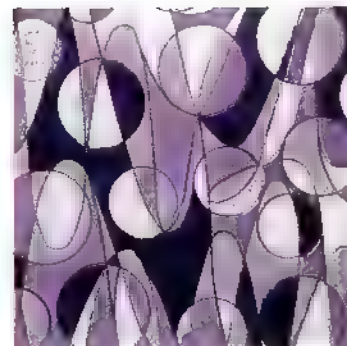
From the flat and howling flute of "Cakeshop Girl" through the spoon-against-crystal imitation of a disco beat in "Lion Sleeps Tonight," Jowe makes mutant pop songs popping with fresh-faced impertinence.

"In the shelter, the fallout shelter, the lion sleeps tonight," they sing to the familiar "whim-o-way" tune, with all the speed of a mating slug and an alien perkiness that would sound sourly off-kilter if it were played against the original. When the lion finishes, it's "Cold Finger" time. "Cold Finger," they begin in evocation of "Goldfinger"—"wider than a mile. I'm crossing you in love tonight." Somewhere between the song's title and the second word, they've smoothly shifted their sassy tentacles to tackle "Moon River."

Strawberry Deutsche Mark makes sense only in the most intuitive way. The rhythm box and alto sax are familiar, and the English-language words are, too, but how they are combined is like no pop that came before. Off-key and definitely offbeat, the album is available from Jowe Head at Strawberry Birthmark, 9 Gladding Terrace, London N16 7NR England, or from their label, Constrictor Records, Am Heedbrink 13, 4600 Dorimund 30, West Germany.

In the bad old days of the late '70s, when the radio seemed to play nothing but E.L.O. and the Eagles, there were a handful of bands in Los Angeles that knew they had no commercial future and didn't give a snit. Among those bands were the Urinals (whose "Ack Ack Ack" may be familiar to Minutemen fans). Kjehl Johansen was a Urinal. So were Kevin Barrett and John Talley-Jones. They changed their name to 100 Flowers, then split up in 1983.

Johansen then created *Danny and the Doorknobs*, a band with a slowly slinking, deep guitar, mystical idiot giggle, swelling pop chorus, and not a Danny in sight. "In Exile" shimmers bittersweetly under Vitus Matafe's soft, clear, and haunting slivers of flute, while "Whispering Glades" co-opts a British Invasion electric keyboard reminiscent of a circus calliope playing music to match the tear-faced clown. A major pleasure in a minor key, the Doorknob's 7-inch single comes from 2801B Ocean Park Blvd. #156, Santa Monica, CA 90405. "In Exile" is also available on their *Poison Summer* LP,



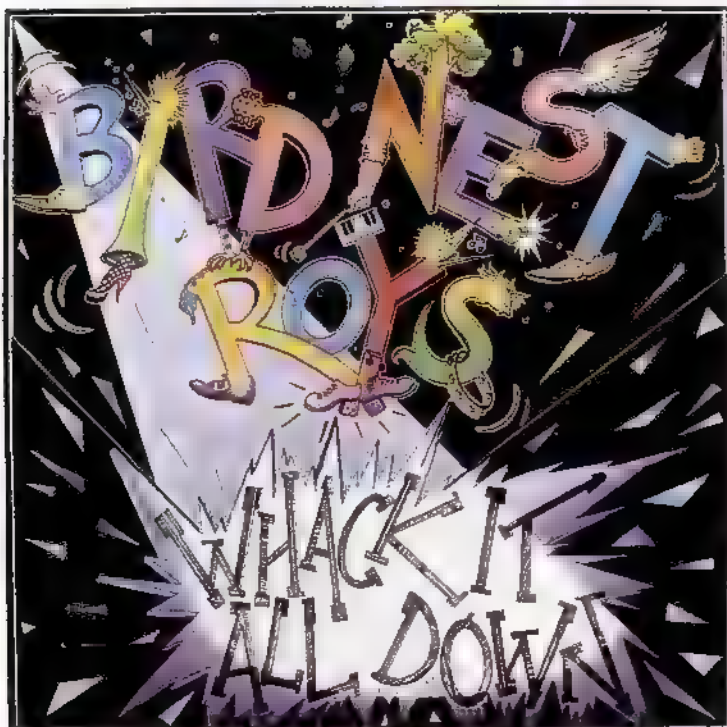
which adds the touch of funk 100 Flowers were known for to the Knobs' own hauntedly happy sound.

It took Talley-Jones and Barrett a little longer to resurface. When they did, *Radwaste* was the result. Their album *Cooking and Nothingness* is an explosion of percussion over a funky base. It takes four drummers to lay down Radwaste's rhythm tracks: Barrett handles snare, Debbie Spinelli from 17 Pygmies clinks away on toms and hi-hat, Jay Jackson tackles congas, and Rob Malone, the bass drum. Their music clips and gallops. In the comical "Ballad of Jenny," a beer-guzzling woman of the West rides the range in her Dodge, doing dastardly damage to evil-doing dudes in the name of the E.R.A. "Kiss of Death" is about a serial killer and his prostitute victims. There's nothing superficial about Radwaste's happy and danceable sound. *Cooking* comes from Happy Squid Records, P.O. Box 94565, Pasadena, CA 91109. Squid can also send you 100 Flowers' three releases.

From the deepest, darkest jungles of urban Germany come *Phillip Boa and the Voodoo Club*, whose 7-inch slab of monkey-shrieking monkeyshines yips and barks in danceable vibrations like a Lhasa apso gone amok. Boa himself has a half-whispered growl that he delivers in a language only magical ears can decode. Occasionally a word like "monster" lurches out of his mouth in intelligible syllables. Mostly he's a melodic witch doctor, intoning incantations in the mystery tongue of rock.

Behind Boa chirps Pia Lunda with a collection of upbeat blasts, and behind her bounces the band's fat and fuzzy guitar. "Skull" features a marimba solo straight from a Heckle-and-Jeckle-meet-the-headhunters cartoon. Through this all clacks the drum beat, a cross between a tom-tom and the little drummer boy's belly-mounted snare. If you want to hear something danceable, "Skull" is, infinitely. It's also easy to listen to and just a trifle bizarre. Like the best music, it takes what we all know and twists it to make a new sound. You can sample that twist by contacting Red Flame, P.O. Box 927, London W3 6YB England.

I can be reached at P.O. Box 4904, Panorama City, CA 91412.





Patrick Harbon/Shopped

Singles

The Day the Earth Shoes Stood Still

Column by John Leland

Few news items offer more instant gratification than word of the abject failure of Sigeu Sigeu Sputnik. For a brief moment, the minions of '70s revisionism lie bruised and defeated. But before you put those Earth Shoes back into storage, best give the situation a closer look. Check the increasing similarity of Cabaret Voltaire to K.C. and the Sunshine Band and the frequency with which you tell your mother, "Touch base with me later, OK, babe?" Also: the reincarnation of Grace Jones, religious or mystical pop, altruistic, collaborative superjam projects, the Monkees, and old school hip-hop funk. Hey, like, you're projecting this really hostile vibe. Don't repress it, go with it. But, like, not here. I need my space.

Level 42: "Hot Water" (Polydor)

Level 42 is by no means London's answer to P-Funk, but what they've achieved is in its own way extraordinary. Essentially an aggregate of jazz hacks, they've condescended to pop music without ever tipping their hand. Or even letting their condescension get in the way of the groove. Instead of casing their tunes for opportunities to kick out the jazz (the death of most funk groups), the members of Level 42 channel their pro chops into tightly wound riffs. And as irrelevant a consideration as they usually are, chops can sometimes be an advantage. On "Hot Water," here served up in a 12-minute mstermix, album version, and live version, the bass and percussion sound like they're trading fours without remembering to stop when it's their turn to lay out,

and the Jimmy Nolen-derived guitar and percussive horns play call and response. Only problem—and this should either kill the track or prove insignificant over time—is the complete lack of a melody.

Gwen Guthrie: "Ain't Nothin' Goin' on but the Rent" (Polydor)

Proof positive of the existence of God. Folks talk about how Grace Jones fused disco and reggae, presiding over the musical miscegenation with a gay/euphoric drug jones and a great haircut. But for my money, Gwen Guthrie has taken this synthesis further and with more... uh, grace. Last year's "Padlock" EP, which featured Guthrie along with Sly and Robbie, Wally Badarou, and remixer Larry Levan, was manna from heaven, the

kind of cool, loose dance music you only dream about. You could dance to "Seventh Heaven" and never get tired or listen to Guthrie breathily ask you to "spread your love over me like peanut butter" and not even get horny. It was that cool. On "Rent," she's without all of the above 'cept Levan, but the track just lopes in effortlessly. As in good reggae, the relaxed groove spins and slithers in the bass, unwinding slowly with the aid of a tribe of percussion. As in good disco, the hook reigns over all the bullshit. And as in most great female pop, Guthrie gets over as a bitch and a half: "Got to have a j-o-b," she sings, "if you wanna be with me," and, furthermore, "no romance without finance." This is cynical ornamentation to cool out an already lazy groove and turn an ordinary single into a 12-inch air-conditioned dance floor. This is even better than a great haircut.

Doug E. Fresh and the Get Fresh Crew: "All the Way to Heaven" b/w "Nothin'" (Reality)

What a way to go. Last summer, Doug E. Fresh and the Get Fresh Crew had the hottest 12-inch in any genre. "The Show" b/w "La-Di-Da-Di" penetrated into cracks and crevices from which no rap record had ever returned alive. The world was his Dove Bar. So Doug waits over a year to produce a sequel, alienates the rapping partner who was so vital to the original hit, and comes out with an overtly religious record: "This will be the first time in history/A rap song was dedicated to G-o-d." Amazing. Careeristic made simple. But for all of that, "Heaven" is a pretty great record. Doug and producer/manager Dennis Bell learned last time out how to make beats dance and rhythms sing. With a bare minimum of music, this single is unrelentingly musical. Me, I never liked "The Show" (Doug's showcase) as much as "La-Di-Da-Di" (MC Ricky D's), so I don't flip over this single, even if it does throw edits from "The Show" into its sonic blender. And the religion leaves me outside on the corner. But I gotta admit that this multi-tiered give-and-go shuffle beat is a killer.

Hindu Love Gods: "Gonna Have a Good Time Tonight" b/w "Narrator" (I.R.S.)

If the popular culture of the '80s stands for anything—other than the return of unabashed sexism, nationalism, and militarism—it is the perfection of kitsch. After the advent of *Moonlighting*, Bette Midler seems just a primitive early pioneer on the bimbo trail. This is perhaps the raison d'être as well as the problem behind the Hindu Love Gods, a one-off small-star band including Peter Buck, Mike Mills, and Bill Berry of R.E.M., along with Warren Zevon and Bryan Cook. What should be just a document of a bunch of friends getting together to ruin the good name of the Easybeats is forced to aspire toward high trash. And this

Above left: Level 42 (l-r) Boon Gould, Mike Lindup, Mark King, and Phil Gould.

transparent attempt on the part of five smart musicians to get stupid never hits that high mark. Good as a trashy jam, and maybe for R.E.M. slaves and collectors, but the Hindu Love Gods never make that leap of faith into quality badness. Does this mean that they're forever stuck with Bette Midler? Coming soon to a Miller beer commercial near you.

Junior: "Hot Tonight" (Mercury)

No two ways about it: This latest 12-inch from Junior is pure, unadulterated fuck music. Over a patient, springy guitar and bass groove, the chorus sets up a tireless mantra: "Really want to get to you/Really want to get to you." Junior and coproducer Dexter Wansell add a minimum of distractions. A bell here, a small synth ornamentation there, a woodblock synched to the bass line. The thing moves with a sense of mechanical inevitability; it insists more than it swings. When Junior feigns ignorance of the chorus's demand and cools out, "If it's not tonight, it's alright," you know he doesn't mean it. He's got one hand, and it hurts like hell. And sure enough, two lines later Mr. Understanding has given up the ruse of settling for delayed gratification and is resorting to falsetto. This is a brilliant, eminently disposable exercise in controlled lust. But it begs the question: Do people really fuck to singles? Address all mail to me at 1965 Broadway, New York, NY 10023.

Micky Dolenz and Peter Tork (of the Monkees): "That Was Then, This Is Now" b/w The Monkees: "(Theme from) The Monkees" (Arista)

The Monkees, unlike the Hindu Love Gods, fully understand the concept of high kitsch. Or at least Micky Dolenz and Peter Tork do. Michael Nesmith seems to be laboring under the onus of a will to Art. Arista, for offering us this record under its odious, parentheses-burdened monicker, either doesn't understand or understands all too well. "That Was

Then" is a confection of chiming, fluffy, retro bubble-gum written by New York trash-poppers the Mosquitos ("We'd like to do a song by our good friends the Mosquitos"). Dolenz and Tork ring all the right bells with an impressive show of contrived innocence and opportunism, but they completely lose producer Michael Lloyd. Lloyd tries to update the group to make them sound like Belinda Carlisle, utterly missing the point: The Monkees' chief virtue is precisely the way in which they're so ironically dated; they only make sense as a permanent anachronism. In peeling off the cobwebs, he stripped away the best part. Why anyone wants to mess with an apex of low art, I'll never understand. And—just quibbling—I'd have rather had one of the foreign language versions of the theme on the flipside.

T La Rock: "Bassmachine" b/w "Breaking Bells" (Sleeping Bag)

Introductions on this record proceed in the following order: Roland 808 drum computer, producer Mantronik, T La Rock. After a weak, egotistical sophomore single, the creator of the amazing hardcore jam "It's Yours" has learned which side his bread is buttered on. Put Mantronik in a room with a beatbox and the results are always mesmerizing. He's clearly the foremost innovator on the instrument. His encounter with the Roland on this side is like Roger Clemmons pitching against your high school baseball team: The question isn't whether he can deliver a monster beat, but how flamboyantly he can show off in the process. As if to say "Look ma, no hands," Mantronik interrupts and side-tracks his own grooves, piles on double-speed fills, adds incongruous neo-surf guitar edits, and goes nuts on the electronic bell sound he first brought out on "Fresh Is the Word." T La Rock, whose intellectual wordplay may or may not have made LL Cool J possible, all but gets lost in the shuffle. Even if "Bassmachine" does give "I Need a Beat" a run for its self-



Above: *Rapper of the month*, Eric B. Left: *Kitschmeisters* (L-R) Peter Tork, Davey Jones, and Mickey Dolenz.

referential money. Lyrically and musically, this is state of the art shit.

Eric B. featuring Rakim: "Eric B. Is President" b/w "My Melody" (Zakia)

Eric B.'s finest moment comes when he tells a hopeful suitor, "You thought I was a doughnut/You tried to glaze me." I have no idea what this means, but it sure sounds great. But this line notwithstanding, Eric's 12-inch is not a showcase for his *bon mots*. It's a vinyl style war, a fierce, dislocating clash between old-school funk/rap and new, electronic hardcore hip hop. Eric B. uses big, simple beats, and a slithering bass that, if left alone, would carry the track. But he fucks with the groove. Just when it sounds like the bass is gonna take it on out, Eric comes in with his unmetered, monotone rap, throwing a prosaic monkey wrench into the pulse of the groove. Add a steady and unpredictable assortment of scratches—on this record, it's not how you scratch, but what you scratch—as well as sound effects and cheap vocal processing, and this sounds like three or four records all fighting to take control of the organism. It's like a dub tune mixed by someone more interested in jamming the effects than preserving the flow. Adventurous shit and damned if Eric B. doesn't pull it off without an (unplanned) hitch. Strictly underground, but the best rap record of the month.

SIDESWIPES

Oh Schoolly-School, how the fuck did you get so uncool? Schoolly-D, creator of perhaps the most compellingly ugly music in the history of the universe, changes the never-fixed spelling of his name to **Scholly-D**, steals from Run-D.M.C. on the disappointingly human

"Gangster Boogie," and rips off Herbie Hancock's "Hardrock" (a crime against nature akin to Phoebe Cates trying to bite Molly Ringwald) on "Maniac" (Place to Be). There's even a bass line and a "radio version." I'm bummed . . . **Matt Bianco's** perky, lightweight Caribbean thing on "Yeah Yeah" (Atlantic) may make him the Mungo Jerry of the '80s. Which isn't such a bad thing to be . . . **M.C. Dollar Bill's** "Lifestyles of the Fresh and Fly" (Profile) exploits neither its way-cool spy movie riff, nor its wacky, effete English uber-M.C. (shades of "The Wikked Rap"), and so puts too much pressure on its limiting fundamental idea. Coulda been a lot better . . . The "Latin Jazzbo" mix of **Willie Coló's** "Set Fire to Me" (A & M) starts off as a tough Latin disco groove, but turns rudely into a homogenized crossover nightmare . . . **Rappin' Duke's** "Duke Is Back" (Tommy Boy) reprises the "duh ha, duh ha" chorus from his sublimely stupid theme song and carries the John Wayne voice improbably into the melody of "New York, New York." No new developments, and if ya got a sufficient dose the first time around, you can pass on this baby. But if ya didn't, you've got an idiotic treat in store . . . The **Swans** "Holy Money" EP (PVC) renews Michael Gira's claim that he isn't a one-cliché artist by adding hip-hop-type horn edits and a beat that Rick Rubin could love to "A Screw (Holy Money)," and by resorting to a shapeless piano dirge on the plodding "Blackmail." The A-side kicks as much ass as the Adrian Sherwood remix of Einstürzende Neubauten's "Yu-Gung." And if you dug that, you oughta hear this . . . **Cabaret Voltaire** drops a bit of its arty baggage on "The Drain Train" EP (Caroline), an anomalous double-disc package that includes three songs and three dub versions. Finally, the funk assumes a life of its own. Instead of turning out lightweight avant-gardisms, the Cabs are now making intense, heavyweight electronic dance music.



Phyllis Ramsey/Star File



THE TEARS OF A CLOWN

Junkie George, a queen without a court, pours his heart out over the horrors of heroin.

Interview by Kevin J. Koffler

Additional research by Rick Sky

Boy George has not been having a good time.

Since July, George has gone through severe bouts of heroin withdrawal, pleaded guilty to heroin possession charges, and been humiliated in front of the world. His brother Kevin has been arrested for allegedly supplying him with smack, and his ex-best friend, transvestite pop tart Marilyn, was also arrested for suspected heroin possession. All George wanted was to become a star so he could have friends and be loved.

Now that he's got what he wants, he's still unloved and without friends, all alone in his big neo-Gothic mansion in London's fashionable Hampstead section. The house formerly belonged to actor Marty Allen. Currently, it's surrounded by groupies. Some have come from as far away as Japan just to catch a glimpse of their fallen idol. On the high stone walls topped with barbed wire that encase his fortress, his fans scrawl messages like "George, you are my drug."

A little later, George prances into the living room, a small, very white space with nothing in it but a white leather couch and a chair with a lightbulb attached to it hanging from the ceiling. On the wall is a poster of Sid Vicious that says "God Save the Queen." In the stark whiteness of the room, George looks like a warped Walt Disney cartoon character. His bleached-blond hair is cropped short, and his entire black and

white outfit is from Boy of London, a trendy shop on Kings Road.

George sits on the sofa and sips tea and munches on cheese and bread brought to him by Bonnie, his housekeeper and assistant. He has a good appetite. People on drugs usually don't eat a lot. It's amazing how healthy he looks. He's not wearing makeup, and his blue eyes look very clear. His voice, however, sounds like the devil from *The Exorcist*. It fills the room and spills over into the larger living room below, which is also very white, where Bonnie and Michael Donalan, George's current boyfriend, are sitting in chairs while Michael Rudetsky, an American musician and producer, the one person George feels understands him musically, is passed out on the couch, either from jet lag or drugs. The next night he will be found dead of an overdose in this very room.

A heated argument is going on inside the house. Donalan, who's drug-free, is viciously screaming at George about using drugs. Now and then, a face peeks from behind the curtain to see if anyone outside is paying attention.

According to Phillip Salon, George's former close friend, "George has to help himself, but he doesn't want to." Some time ago, Salon tried to get him to stop taking drugs, but George was just not strong-willed enough. "He got involved with drugs in the first place because he's got problems. He might have fame and fortune, but that's not what

he really wants, so he's gone on a mission to destroy himself. He's not satisfied with the life he's got, and he can't accept things as they are."

Salon doesn't think Michael's death will make George think more about what he really wants. "It might just put him on a new course of self-destruction. He goes up and down on his relationships with people. When he's druggie, he's horrible. I can't cope with him when he's on binges. I just walk off."

Salon says the only people who could put up with him when he's on drugs are the grovelers, and they're helping to pull him down. "The sad thing is, he's surrounded by people who put up with all of his whims and behavior. They tell him how marvelous he is—even when he's pathetically out of it—and that makes him go further and further. . . . It makes him get away with murder."

This candid interview with George takes place in the smaller living room. Despite the fact that George has been resisting the press, which he feels is trying to crucify him, George is ready to tell his definitive story to someone he trusts. He wants the truth to be known. This is his truth.

When was the first time you took heroin?

The first time I took it was a year and a half or two years ago. I went to Paris for the collections, someone offered me some, and I took it. I keep getting asked the questions, "Why did someone so



Steve Rappoport/London Features

intelligent, with everything, get involved with heroin?" There is no answer.

What happened the first time you took it?
I remember being really sick. I then remember not doing it again for six months, but then I started doing it on a regular basis because people around me were taking it. The first time I did it again was about a year ago in London.

But why would you take a drug again that just made you sick and that you didn't get high from?
I could actually answer that I'm an idiot, but I really don't know. In London at the moment, heroin is a fashionable drug, frighteningly fashionable. It is for a lot of people just a matter of fashion. It didn't really make me sick again, though. You sort of adapt to it. You know that if you eat and do heroin, you're going to vomit. It's awful. My life became so involved in it, it became impossible to do anything without a big H looming over me, sort of like a cloud over my head.

Were you shooting up?
I never shot heroin. I'm frightened of needles. I never shot up, but I saw people who did that. I think towards the end, that's what made me stop. With heroin you begin to rely on really seedy people. Your life becomes redundant. I started to see so much debauchery. I almost got frightened out of it in the end. I saw a girl put a needle in her arm, and I started crying and got hysterical. "Get me out of here, get me out of here," I screamed.

I was in someone's flat buying heroin, and I was screaming, and everyone started saying, "What are you suddenly getting all moral for?" I suddenly realized, God, you can't be moral unless you stop. It just freaked me out so much. I think there are different levels of debauchery, and that was, like, frightening. It's horrible. I was so scared.

When did you realize you had acquired a habit?
You never think you're going to get a habit. Meg Patterson, who is treating me, told me she treated a couple who had been taking it for fifteen years, and nothing happened to them. They never got ill and were fine until they suddenly woke up and they were in terrible pain. They realized they had a dependency. That happened to me about six months ago. I woke up one day vomiting. I'd been doing

"When I first started taking heroin, it was very casual, once in a blue moon, but then I started taking it really, really, really regularly."



Anon Corbin

lots and lots of heroin, and I'd been up for days. I slept for about three days, and when I woke up, my body needed it. I was like an old man, like a cripple. I was lying there like a cripple.

What did you do?

I remember I went to see my doctor on Harley Street. I could hardly get myself into my car. I was in such a state. He says, "You're over the worst part of it. The first three days you've been asleep, you're lucky."

He gave me some pills, but I started again. This time around, I suffered. Meg Patterson's treatment—you basically go cold turkey. No substitute drugs. They fix these electrodes to your ears, and they give you this kind of Walkman box, and it sends electric frequencies through your body, but basically, you sweat it out. It's not an easy out. It's very, very painful. I never had that before. For once, I really, really suffered.

Tell me about Meg Patterson.

She was great. She didn't try to sort of brainwash me with stupid propaganda. She admitted heroin was a wonderful feeling. She said she first experienced it in Hong Kong when babies would cry, and if you gave them a shot of heroin or methadone the amazing calm it gave them was what interested her in it. She understood fully what the high was like and how pleasant it was. It numbs you. It gives you a fake sense of superiority. You're arrogant. You think you know something everyone else doesn't.

On the other hand, when you first start taking it, you don't know what's around the corner. That's the most horrible thing about it. No dealer is going to tell you, "Very soon, you are going to wake up one morning vomiting violently, and you're going to be an old man." That is exactly what happened. I suddenly developed a dependency. I kept saying, "I must stop, I must stop," but I didn't. In the end, well, I did. I went for treatment. I got myself well. I don't know if I'm well now; I'm still on pills. It's a better state than I was in.

What are you taking, a downer?

It's a leveler. Let's not say downer. It's a leveler. You stick it under your tongue, let it melt there, and it stops the cravings.

Tell me about the events leading up to your treatment.

My mother was turning up at my house unexpectedly all the time. This is unusual for my mother because my parents never just called. They know what my life's like, and that I work, or I'm always doing something. When I see them—maybe once a week or twice a week—it would be planned. It wouldn't be a situation where I was busy and couldn't spend any time with them. She just kept turning up, so she knew something was wrong. She never really at first came out with it, but one day she just burst into tears, and it was terrible. My mother's really the reason I stopped. At first I didn't care. You don't. It's not because you don't care, but it's because of the heroin. I know that now. When I started reasoning with myself, my mother had such a strength over me. My mother said, "I'll die before I'll let you do this to yourself."

Was she persistent?

I love my mother. She kept on and on and on. I nearly couldn't give it up. She was planning to kidnap me and everything. I didn't know she was going home and crying nonstop at the family home, weeping and saying, "What am I going to do?" My father, his answer to everything is to shout and

Top: Boy George performing at an anti-apartheid concert in London. Left: Marilyn, his sometime friend.

stamp. He was doing that, and he was just making it worse for her. He wouldn't do it to me because I'm a grown man, and I'll do whatever the hell I like. It doesn't mean he has to sit back and watch me destroy myself, and that's what he was trying to say to me. "Look, George, you are an adult, but you're not being very adult at the moment. We can't let you do this."

I saw my brother for the first time today. David, the one who told. I saw him today, and I said to him, "I don't hate you. I love you. You're my brother. I'm not going to make a big deal of being friendly with you. I'm not going to make a big number of 'hi, how are you? kiss kiss,'" because I don't feel like that. I really wanted to give David a hug today, but that will have to wait. I'm going to have to accept what he did to me. As far as I'm concerned, it was a family issue, personal. That's why I lied.

In a way my brother David will tell you himself he regrets saying anything to the press, because they really bastardized everything he said. He got it so bad, everybody picked on him. When that broke, as much pressure as I got, he got.

What went through your mind when you first heard that?

I wanted to kill him—string him up, cut off his balls, and sew them to his forehead. I wanted to marry him to an Albanian lesbian midget. Force him to a life of misery. I hated him so much. Now I still hate him for doing it. No, hate is the wrong word, because you have to put out too much emotion to hate someone, but he knows how I feel. Today is the first I've seen him since he did it, and there wasn't any tension, thank God, and that's what the press wanted. They all want me to hate him.

Why should I hate David? I love the guy, he's my brother. He said he'd do it again because he thought I was killing myself. Every time he says he'd do it again I want to floor him, but I know he means well. I know deep down he did it for the right reasons, and so there's nothing I can say bad about him. I don't hate him. Please print that. I do not hate my brother, I love him. He's my brother, and he'll always be my brother, and I'll always love him.

Between my manager, my record company, and my family, everyone was freaked out. I think one day he woke up and said, "Fuck it, I'm just going to say it," and he did. He really regretted it.

I decided long before he did that that I was going to step. In fact, I was coming off when it hit the papers, and I started again. He didn't know anything about the ins and outs of my heroin addiction. He just knew I was.

Unfortunately, he had seen me on a few bad days, and he was terrified. He thought I was going to die. A lot of people thought I was going to die. A lot of people who loved me just really were terrified.

So you stopped, started, and stopped doing heroin again?

I stopped again, and that's when I went for treatment. Tuesday morning they raided my house and arrested everyone [David had gone to the press two weeks before the raid]. I had stopped already, and I was on these pills called DF118s.

One morning I woke up, and there were thousands of journalists, and I thought, "Am I at the right house?" This is my home, and no one's ever been here. Where I lived before, there was always press and always fans, but I'd always led a peaceful life at my other place.

I burst into tears. I was hysterical—"Oh my God, TV cameras." It was so frightening. I knew what was happening. I knew what was happening, and I ran



"No dealer is going to tell you, Very soon, you are going to wake up one morning vomiting violently, and you're going to be an old man."

out and got so high. I went to a dealer's house and got so high and called my brother and cursed him on his answering machine, and then I just got hysterical.

Then where did you go?

I hid out at Helen Terry's for days.

Were you high the whole time at Helen's house?

No, no, no, not during the whole period. On and off, whenever I got sick. I was taking it to keep stable, but then I decided I had to do something. That day, that Sunday, I threw a load down the toilet. I cried and said, "I got to get over this." It was awful.

I went to Richard Branson's boat, went back to Michael's flat with him, got my clothes, and got in a car and went off to Meg Patterson, and that was it. The rest is history. I went away and said, "Let's just do it," and it was painful, it really was.

It was the only time in my life where I've experienced extreme pain, and I think I needed that. I think that is what shocked me, is that realizing, it's a dead-end street, heroin.

What kind of pain is it?

It's like convulsions. Your leg shakes the whole time. You're a wreck. I've never been in the hospital before, and I've never had any tremendous operation or griefs like that, but it's like somebody is inside you sort of pulling you, sort of scratching at you and screaming, "Help me, help me." It's almost like your skeleton inside is another person, and it's screaming at you, "Get me the drugs, get me the drugs."

I wrote some great poems when I was at Branson's. It was horrible. I really thought I was going to go mad. The press on top of it didn't help. Obviously I can't say they had no right to do it. I'm Boy George and made a point for years of being antidrug, and I had to expect that. It was the nastiest story for them. It was wonderful for them. It was the best thing to happen for them since Christmas Day. Every day was another story, and I had to expect that. The only thing was, I was so ashamed because of my family.

Do you think your brother Kevin has been charged unfairly with supplying you with drugs?

He didn't supply me. He came with me once to a dealer when I couldn't move. I could just about



Top: Boy George and his ex-lover, Culture Club drummer Jon Moss. Right: Going into the courtroom for sentencing.

Phil Lottus/London Features

walk. It makes you into a lethargic wreck. I became a sloth. Kevin drove me to the house of the guy who got busted, Steve Lubin, and helped me get heroin one time.

Unfortunately, what the police did was play everyone against each other. A few people who I won't mention—Marilyn one of them—just said everything. "Yes, it's true. He does take heroin." They just sang like birds. My brother Kevin, they said to him, "If you don't admit you bought heroin for your brother, we're going to get him. We're going to get George."

Kevin just said, "Look, he's just gone for treatment. Leave the poor guy alone." So, foolishly, he admitted to doing things. Now I think the charges are going to be changed because the police believe he only came once, which is true.

I'm not a witness for him because it could work against him if I testify for him. If he gets any prison sentence, I will definitely chain myself to the outside of _____. I will. I will not stand for it, because the guy did it because he loves me, he's my brother. He helped me once, and believe me, if you had a brother who was a heroin addict and saw he was so sick that he had to go for it, you'd help him. You might not want to—he was fighting everything inside and feeling totally immoral, but he couldn't just see me sit there and vomit and scream and cry. I was a wreck, and he couldn't watch me be a wreck, so he helped me.

I'm really sorry I made him do that, it's my fault he got charged.

Now the police are being pressed to make a martyr out of him because I got let off. Fuck it, I never got let off at all. I can't go to certain countries. I pleaded guilty because I was told by the police that if I helped them convict the two dealers, I wouldn't get charged. There's never been anyone in history who's been charged without getting caught. I never, ever was caught. I admitted to it to assist the police with their sources, like a fool. I got charged. I was charged. I'm a convict. It's not good for me. It's a terrible thing for me. Everyone says I got off lightly. I fucking did not. Lightly isn't having my whole family destroyed by the media.

Have you cut Marilyn out of your life?

No. I don't think I could ever do that. A lot of people want me to. A lot of people have begged me to get rid of him. I think so many people hate Marilyn, but I don't hate him. I do not hate him, and I will not seriously slag him off. If he rang now and he was in trouble, I'd go and see him. I don't care what he says about me.

Believe me, I've been like a donkey with a carrot being waved in front of me, and Marilyn is the carrot. I've been interviewed, and people have said he's said this and that, but I really won't be baited any more about it.

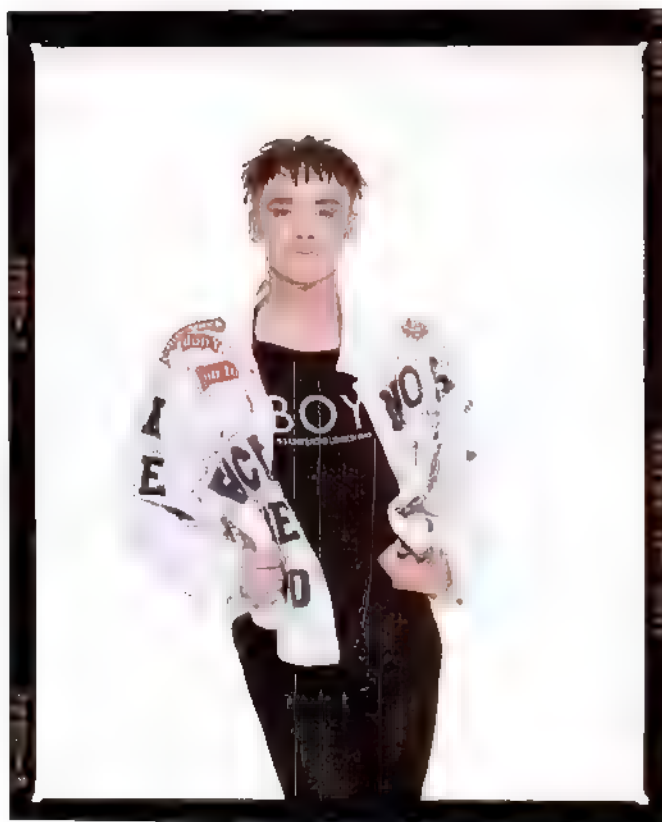
It's like with my father. My father is an old guy. I can change, he can't. I look at Marilyn like my father. I look at Marilyn like an old man who has set opinions, set beliefs, and is very, very dogmatic. I look at it like I'm big enough to change and intelligent enough to overlook any of Marilyn's major faults—and there are plenty of them—and just sort of adapt around him.

My manager's wife said to me last week, she said, "Look at him like a ladder. He starts out with twenty rungs. Take away a rung for every thing he does bad. Eventually he'll do something so bad you won't want him in your life anymore." He hasn't done that yet. He has about thirteen rungs left.

I've got such an affection for the guy. He's another addiction for me. I hate the idea of being pitied, but I did feel sorry for him terribly, and I think he's a tragic creature.

I think the one thing about Marilyn is that he's cunning, witty, charming, seductive—everything, but he's not intelligent. He was not gifted with a large brain when he was born, and I think that's one

"It's like somebody is inside you sort of pulling you, sort of scratching at you and screaming, 'Help me, help me.'"



Paul Gabel

of the things that's got in his way.

With Marilyn, was it based around heroin and freebasing?

I don't know about Marilyn but I know he was freebasing. It was turning him into a wreck of a person. I actually at one point—the cheek of it, actually, with me on heroin—said to him, "If you don't stop freebasing, I'll never speak to you again." He did actually stop, only because he couldn't afford it and I wouldn't pay. I mean, I would never pay anyone's drug bills. I'm not a pusher. I have my bad habits, but I'd never push drugs to people.

He was just like a madman. I remember one day he was banging his head against the washing machine, crying, saying I'd ruined his career and that he had nothing to live for. I'll tell you what he said. He said he met Diana Ross, and he's always wanted to meet Diana Ross, it was his life's ambition, and now he wanted to die.

Did any of your friends turn their backs on you during your ordeal?

The band did, if I can call them friends. The rest of the band disowned me, they didn't want to know. Roy (Hay, Culture Club's guitarist) went on TV in London last week and said that he's been looking after me. Bullshit. None of them did, Jon (Moss, drummer) included. They all just said, "We just wash our hands of you."

Jon, your best friend and ex-lover?

Absolutely. He wasn't interested. He didn't want anything to do with that. Jon was losing grip of me. Forget about the sexual side of it, because I won't discuss it with anyone or whatever, but with Jon, he had some sort of control over me. As he motivated the band, he was like the organizer, the cheerleader. He made everything happen. Because of what I was doing to myself, he gradually lost his interest in Culture Club.

I was Culture Club, and Jon and I sort of inspired each other. I became this sort of slob, a psychological slob who wasn't interested in anything. Jon kind of backed off, became very limp, and was no longer interested in Culture Club.

Is that when your personal relationship ended, too?

People have tried so hard to say George started doing drugs when Jon ditched him. Crap. It has nothing to do with Jon, he is not responsible. No one is responsible. I'm an adult. I started doing it. I'm responsible. It's my problem. I think you really know who your friends are when this sort of thing happens. My friend Michael stuck with me through thick and thin, and I was disgusting to him. Then there was Bonnie, and I treated her like shit. I'm surprised she never walked out. I was really, really vile. I was dreadful to my parents, and they stuck with me, too.

Does Culture Club still exist?

Absolutely. We're releasing "Heaven's Children" here in about three weeks. We did a video to that, and I just did the photos. It's very much there. I'm actually off next week to Montserrat to record some solo stuff. That probably screams of SPLIT, SPLIT, SPLIT, but actually it isn't. Jon's coming to do all the drum arrangements, so far. He's tentatively booked, but if we hear any more about Bananarama, he won't be coming. Roy's doing some stuff, as is Mikey.

I'm just doing this because I want to.

Can you sing now, 'cause your voice is gravelly.

Oh, yeah. I have asthma. I have really bad asthma. I was on a TV show the other day, and the woman interviewing me is called Ann Diamond. I was still hoarse-throated, and she asked me what was wrong with my throat. I said I have asthma, and she said,

continued on p. 90

TALKING

TRUE
STORIES

HEADS

THE NEW ALBUM

PRODUCED AND MIXED BY TALKING HEADS
MUSIC BASED ON THE WARNER BROS. MOTION PICTURE TRUE STORIES



Come to where the flavor is.



Marlboro Red or Longhorn 100's—
you get a lot to like.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette
Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

In the modern ruins, the more things change, the more they remain the same. In R.E.M.'s music, the more things remain the same, the more they change. Fables of the deconstruction.

VISIONS OF GLORY

Article by Barry Walters
Photography by Chris Carroll

Pretty Persuasion
I can't imagine R.E.M. vocalist Michael Stipe trying to sell me a beer.

*Underneath the trains and sky
Mumble mumble she see I
Swim a sea my sister's mud
Mumble mumble mumble Bud*

It wouldn't work. They wouldn't try to make it work. R.E.M. is an American band, not an AMERICAN BAND. They play rock, not R.O.C.K., like some other bands you might know. They don't try to tattoo Old Glory on your chest. Stipe's lyrics may be ambiguous sometimes, but no politician could ever twist them to fill his youth campaign. R.E.M. jangles, but more important, they don't jingo. For that, I admire them. R.E.M. has integrity. Sometimes I think R.E.M. has a little too much integrity. I like R.E.M. . . . BUT. As Pee-Wee Herman says, everybody's got a big but.

South Central Rain (I'm Sorry)

I have my doubts. From their first IRS release, the *Chronic Town* EP in 1982, to last year's *Fables of the Reconstruction/Reconstruction of the Fables* LP, I've liked each record of theirs less than the other. The hooks get progressively less consistent as the band matures and favors mood and murk over movement. On early tunes, the songs had a coherence that compensated for Stipe's fragmentary atmospheric sketches. But with *Fables*, the sound just crumbles. I won't deny the allure of that tension in R.E.M.'s best work between the rush





of the rhythm section, the density of Peter Buck's guitar overdubs, and the tentativeness of Stipe's attack. But Stipe doesn't have much range, either musically or emotionally, and his later deliveries favor a world-weary approach over the appealing, hushed boy voice of "Gardening at Night."

Pilgrimage

FREE AIDS WITH EVERY B.J.—TERMINAL SEX, reads the sign on the men's room door in Charlotte, North Carolina, where I am transferring to a flight to Athens. Check out the molded plastic cafeteria; the place is clean. I ask for some of the scrambled eggs and hash browns heated in stainless steel bins, but pass on the grits. The cashier hits me with the first twang of the trip. "How y'all doin' t'day?" she radiates. Many men and women sport spare tires squeezed into polyester blends. I spot a woman with a lacquered B-52s hairdo.

Shaking Through

After an hour delay, I climb into a dinky commuter plane. I sit behind the pilot so I can keep a watch on him. He looks 18. I catch him peeking at a list of things to do before taking off. Before I can finish worrying, we land. I forgot to tell the R.E.M. organization what I look like, but getting off the plane, I notice I'm the only one with a chance in hell of being a rock critic. The guy picking me up, Chris Edwards, with his walrus mustache, is the only one at the Athens airport who could be waiting for a rock critic.

Wendell, Gee!

Chris whisks me to a sunken veggie-bar-slash-ice-cream-parlor, True Confections, where Stipe awaits me. Chris asks how long I will need. Thinking a whole afternoon, I hesitate. "An hour?" he asks. He introduces me to Stipe, who tells Chris, "Pick him up in a half hour." Stipe spends the next five minutes massaging a girl's shoulders, acting very much the regular aloof guy, barely looking at me. "I'm only agreeing to talk to you because I didn't want you to think I'm a snob," he finally says.

Old Man Kensey

"Why do you stay in Athens?"

"I was born and raised in Georgia," says Stipe. "This is home. When I fly in from somewhere and I see the tops of the pine trees, I get all lachrymose and weepy. I've got red clay in my blood. I really love hot weather. Humidity is something I thrive on. I become really energetic when it gets stifling. Everybody has a place they consider home. It's really just a building or a room. It's really nothing, except to you it offers solace and security. I miss that—just being in one place, being able to wedge myself into the ground a little bit and shake with the wind. Traveling can be really unsettling—no pun intended—unless you're pretty well-centered."

"How do you handle it, then?"

"I've traveled all my life. [He grew up an army brat.] I'm kind of amazed at how adaptable people are. There are moths that when cities became polluted were able to change their color to blend in with the pollution on buildings. I think people are like that. You can take a person, put them any place in the world, and they're going to be able to adapt to their environment in order to survive. For a long time, I thought there was one place that you had to be, and if you take someone out of their environment they would just wither and die. I don't think like that anymore."

"I heard you do sculpture."

"Not really. I guess my house is a sculpture. My bicycle certainly is. [Points to old blue bike in front of us.] No, I don't do sculpture very much. I draw a lot. Most of my drawings are pretty bad, but most people

Left: scenes from a hard day's R.E.M. Top to bottom: Michael Stipe, Peter Buck, Mike Mills, and Bill Berry.

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Naturally, I loved
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accept them. If nothing else just the sheer volume of them says something. [Catches himself.] I don't go for quantity over quality, but if you don't show them to anybody, then maybe in thirty or forty years you might be able to pick out all the shitty ones, burn them, and keep the rest. Without sounding like any kind of—art slob—I like taking pictures and working in a darkroom. I go out and study trees and swim a lot. I ride bikes, paint, draw, sweep, garden, talk to people, write a lot. I like to type as a kind of meditative force. Typing is something that kind of explodes me and scatters me around, and I can sweep back the pieces and I'm a new person."

"What do you type?"

"Anything at all. Sometimes I take a book and copy it. I have this great old typewriter my mother got for my graduation from high school. It's just a war horse. I once did a drawing of this woman who was naked. It wasn't my mother. It was this beautiful woman, and I happened to draw the name of the typewriter across her torso. So every time I sit down to type—it's a Royal typewriter—I think of this woman."

Stipe interrupts himself and takes off his pair of old beige wraparound sunglasses.

"Does it bother you that I'm wearing these? Some-

R.E.M. is an American band, not an AMERICAN BAND. They jangle, but they don't jingo.

times it bothers me to talk to someone wearing sunglasses, and I tell them. Like, 'Hey, you got a booger up your nose.'

"You seem to follow the whole punk d.i.y. philosophy."

"Yeah. Anybody that walks can sing. You just have to get over the feeling of being overheard. Here comes a beautiful girl wearing a T-shirt I made."

"How has your life changed?"

"It hasn't changed much, except that I'm occupied with the band full-time plus. I don't think in terms of past and present. That's a real American Indian way of thinking. They didn't have any past tenses to their verbs. [Sees a handsome blond man] Hi, howya

doin'? [Then to me] That guy always takes his shirt off downtown.

"The pace is so incredibly slow down here, like syrup. The heat has a lot to do with that. Slowness is the most obvious and most intrinsic thing that goes into our music. You can't really express slowness unless you play at a dirge pace, and that doesn't really express it. That just mimics it. In the beginning, we were pretty much a thrash band playing pop melodies. Almost all we did was thrash, because we were terrified of playing slow. None of us could play well enough other than to play the fastest song possible. I have always tended to slower-paced music. So I started slowing down my part to compensate for everyone else playing at breakneck speed. And that's how the rhinoceros got its hide [laughs]. [Then, out of nowhere] What if the next national fad sport was tree climbing? They would build these spas in New York City where they would have trees shipped in from all around the world. People would be connoisseurs of what kind of tree they would climb."

"Where did that come from?"

"It was something that hit me last summer. I thought it would be real hilarious to have lessons in tree climbing and particular outfits. And the idea of an entire urban area emptying out on the weekend so that people could run out and climb trees [laughs].

"I know I'm going to be asked a lot of questions about our new album. I've put a lot into those songs, and I think I've spoken my piece. Now I'm leaving it up to everybody else to take what I've given and expand on it. I really want those songs to be heard. They're colossal. It's the best thing we've ever done."

"Without getting too Zen about it, I think the words that I write are there and the songs are there, and it's just a matter of waiting for the right ones to come together right. And when they do, like on 'Feeling Gravity's Pull' or 'Begin the Begin,' then it's transcendent."

"Do you know in Brazil where Robert DeNiro gets swallowed up by all those papers and disappears? That's my life. And I'm just waiting for that moment when I'm going to walk into my bathroom and all the paper around me is going to surround me and I disappear down the toilet. I'm just surrounded by paper, and it's got words all over it. So I pick off whatever gets stuck to my face whenever I cut myself shaving, put it down on the table, and that turns into a song."

"What are your religious beliefs?"

"That's a hard one. My parents are Christians, and the last thing I'd want to do would be to offend them, 'cause I'm not Christian. On the record, I believe in rocks [laughs]. How's that? Listen to the song 'I Believe.' It's all there. Once I said in an interview that I like turtles, and this guy brought me a fucking turtle in the middle of a tour. Now people will be giving me huge boulders everywhere we play."

"Let's stop before this reaches diminishing returns," he says.

It leaves a bitter taste.

Just a Touch

Stipe appears to be undergoing some kind of inner conflict. He's been under the eye of anti-elitist rock 'n' rollers, but acts as if he wants to shroud himself in mystery, to stay on guard: there's his roundabout apology for wearing sunglasses like a star, his defense of his right to wear them. He's friendly, with a habit of offering the kind of information he's willing to give, but recoils from too much contact. He's like his lyrics—very specific about his impressions, but shies away from any direct exposure of his feelings. There's a sense of performance about Stipe, as if each question was there to test his creativity.

Maps and Legends

In Mike Mills's living room there's a framed "Vote Fife

Left to right: Stipe, Berry, Buck, and Mills savoring life's rich pageant.



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for Sheriff" poster ("From the *Return to Mayberry* film," says Mills proudly). Two feet away, *The Andy Griffith Show* is on a large TV. It's the only new thing in a room filled with molded fiberglass '60s chairs, a liver-shaped coffee table, and toys everywhere. After a whirlwind tour of the house, we step around boxes of records and out to Mills's van for a tour of historic Athens.

Mills tells the often-repeated story of how the band started from one party thrown at a church, then came more parties, and then their first date at a club called Tyrone's. "We opened for the Brains, another Georgia band. It was generally acknowledged that we blew 'em away." There's an undeniably boastful side to the band whenever they're discussing the group.

"That's the Richard B. Russell Agricultural Research Center," says Mills, pointing out an Athens high-rise. "That's where they tamper with cows and mutate chickens to see what happens."

"Now look at those horses." We pass by the largest and most beautiful tawny horses I've ever seen. "They're probably mutants, too."

Sitting Still

Mills takes me to The Taco Stand, where beans and rice are 79¢, and we talk while we eat. Although Mills is much more straightforward than Stipe, he's a lot less personal. His experience with interviews shows (he and Buck do most of the talking for the band), and his answers tend to be pat.

"I've made a little more money," he says. "I bought my house. That brings on more changes than anything that has to do with the band. We didn't have a clear idea what we were going for on *Fables*—we didn't have time to formulate one. We wanted this new album to be a little more focused. Some of our best stuff is on *Fables*, but as a whole I think it's weak. We wanted to have enough time to write good songs for this one."

"I thought Mike's voice was pretty clear on *Fables*. It's just that what he says is not what you expect to hear. At first, you might not follow his thought because he leaves out words that normally would be there. But if you keep listening, you can follow him. Michael's gotten a little more confident and better at it every time we record. Now we'd all like to score a movie. That would be fun. If Tangerine Dream can do it, we can."

"Both my parents worked. I grew up around lots of music. My dad is a dramatic tenor and my mother sings and plays piano and guitar. Dad was a tenor soloist at a big church in Atlanta a few years ago. Now he sings at friends' weddings. I used to go to sleep hearing tenor arias and piano concertos. But he'd also play the Four Freshman and the Five Trombones. My brother works for his company, but he has a band together."

"What would you be doing if you weren't in music?"

"I think I'd be playing baseball."

Gardening at Night

I catch up on some missed sleep and wake up to take the 10-minute walk back past the Holiday Inn to the 40 Watt Club, where I'm supposed to meet Peter Buck and see Matt "Guitar" Murphy, the classic blues and soul musician who was in *The Blues Brothers*. The cover is \$4, down from \$5 because I walk in as Murphy and his band finish their first show with "Soul Man." The club looks like the set for a beer commercial. A big banner hangs over the bar declaring: "Budweiser Always a Dollar." Most everybody looks peaches-and-cream collegiate, except for a few still-hairy hippies, one of whom is the bartender and owner. No blacks except those in Murphy's band. No Peter Buck. But Bill Berry, R.E.M.'s drummer and sometime songwriter, finds me and introduces me to his newlywed wife.

"Barry, meet Mary Berry."

The kids are dancing furiously, even to blues. Rap groups rarely get such an enthusiastic reaction in

New York. Berry disappears. Chris takes me to R.E.M.'s rehearsal studio.

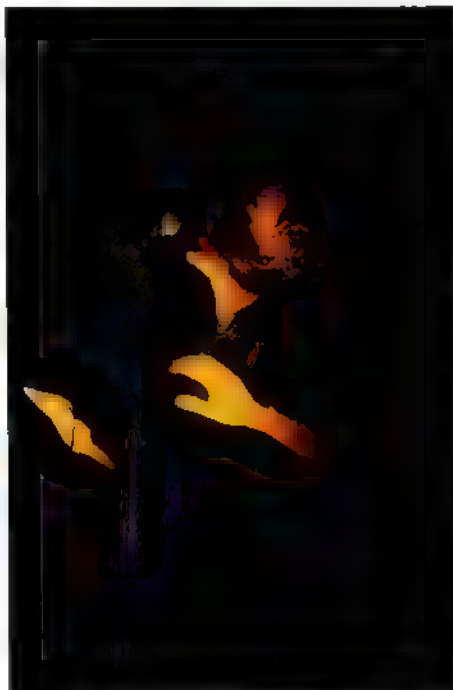
Laughing

Berry is there with Mary and Curtis Goodman, R.E.M.'s stage manager. After much dawdling, R.E.M.'s spinoff cover band the Corn Cob Webs start picking up instruments. A blues jam begins. Curtis tells me to pick up a cowbell, and I tap along. "Hey Barry," Berry shouts, "you play drums!"

I warn them I haven't been behind a drum set in years. I also realize I've never played a blues beat. What would Frank Beard from ZZ Top do? Berry throws down some wild harmonica on a few nameless numbers while I struggle and have the time of my life. Afterwards, Berry turns to me, pats my back several times, and says, "You were great."

What If We Give It Away?

Jim Herbert, director of R.E.M. videos such as "Pretty Persuasion" and "Driver 8" and painting teacher at the University of Georgia (where he once taught



Michael), is called in as a spokesman until Peter shows up.

"My kind of filmmaking is structured similarly to their music," says Herbert. "It's romantic, layered, somewhat diffuse, and there's a certain southern ambience. I always allow a certain amount of decay and crumbling quality to the film itself. Michael's interest in primitivism, textures, and surfaces, and even the music itself, will touch on that wet underside of the board that is the South. It's a little bit squirmy and dark."

"I'll tell you something that's similar to my paintings and their music. It's the concept of continuous field as opposed to clear figure ground. Continuous field is like a Monet painting. The picture is filled with small intervals that add up to an environmental situation. The Whirlygig place where we filmed 'Pretty Persuasion' is like continuous field. It's thou-

sands of repeated patterns spinning, all going in different directions and in different textures, but they're all in intervals. Michael's lyrics are sunk back into the band's textured, layered presence like continuous field painting, as opposed to a vocalist popping out in front of the music."

I think of rap and the stark sounds of L. L. Cool J and Run-D.M.C. as being music with clear figure ground, and how that music represents urban life's hard edges.

"When Michael wrote the lyrics for the Golden Palominos, he had Anton Fier's tape, and he built up the song by mumbling bits of lyrics and looking over at someone's backyard and including what he saw. His whole thing is getting into a situation, finding the things that are emblematic or symbolic, and tracing together the natural connections. He doesn't force things like a designer. He's more like an artist who finds things."

"When I interviewed him, he seemed not to remember his childhood."

"Michael doesn't like to reveal obvious things. There are veils, distance, and layers around him. My image of him is very foggy. Some people accuse him of having a star aspect to his personality. There's definitely an elusiveness about him."

Stumble

Herbert's explanation is cut short by the belated entrance of Peter Buck. While the other band members look basically like regular guys, Buck's appearance has become shockingly rock star-ish. He now has long, stringy hair that reaches the shoulders of his rock-star white shirt, which is rolled up at the cuffs to reveal a rock-star knot of twine around his wrist. He's wearing black rock-star jeans and blue suede rock-star shoes. He towers above me at a lanky rock-star height. I ask about his father, who may be dying. "He's not doing too good. He's in intensive care with a very high temperature."

Buck is shaking. He squirms in his seat and answers my questions thoughtfully, but with edgy, rapid-fire replies. I really feel sorry for him and think he probably dressed that way to cheer himself up.

"Michael is so unpredictable. I'm never sure what is going to appeal to him and what isn't. He never takes the easy way, which can be pretty frustrating. But quite often his left-field suggestions make you question things you took for granted, like how songs are arranged and the distinction between lead and background vocals. When we finally have a pretty good handle on the song, he tears and twists it apart so his lyrics and melody can fit in. Mike Mills has a real good ear for harmony. One of the things that isn't often written about us is that we're one of the most harmonically weird bands in rock 'n' roll. When I come up with a chord progression, Mike will do a bass part that has nothing to do with it but still makes sense."

"How do you see your own contribution?"

"If nothing else, I'm a big enough asshole to get everyone moving. I'm probably the most impatient and the one to yell at people. I think I have a pretty good sense of rhythm."

"And Bill?"

"What can you say about the drummer without making him sound like just the drummer? He writes good songs, he has really neat ideas for arrangements, and he's a real tremendous drummer."

"What is most important to you besides music?"

[After the longest gap in conversation] "It sounds pathetic. I can't think of anything. Other than family, friends, and music, there's really nothing. I try to read things that are good for me, but I also read real crap, too. Right now I'm reading the new Iris Murdoch, *The Philosopher's Pupil*, which is pretty rough going. But I'm also reading *Elvis and Me* by Priscilla. I noticed over the last few months that after I make the record and tour, I'll come home to hibernate, and I

Above: Michael Stipe, lead vocalist for the only band that mutters, feeling gravity's pull.

continued on p. 78

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After his band's successful headlining engagement at the Ritz in New York City, Frank Kearns, Cactus World News's tall and gregarious lead guitarist, nervously looks over the crowd of well-wishers, music biz people, and would-be groupies that has invaded the band's backstage haven.

"Look, tell me honestly," he asks me, "how did it get on tonight? I expected a bit more people to show, you know? I mean, is this all just a load of crap or what?"

Already pegged by many as MCA's great white rock 'n' roll hope, the Dublin band Cactus World News is in the midst of its first major US tour. Their brisk flight to the top (the group formed in the spring of 1984 and was signed to MCA in August 1985) has provided ample fodder for the usual doubting Thomases and hard-ass critics. The band's association with U2 singer Bono Vox, who coproduced their pre-MCA debut EP and made it the first release on U2-sponsored Mother Records, cinches it; after all, the cynics say, Bono is just the type of egotistical bastard who would promote bands whose only goal in life is to be U3.

The U2 connection hasn't transformed from blessing to burden for Cactus World News—yet. Says Kearns, "It's helped a lot by making people sit up and listen and say [he changes his voice to a disbelieving sneer], 'What the hell is this all about? Is this a lot of hype or crap?' And then they go around to a friend's house and listen to the album and they either say, 'Ah—I thought so' or 'I really like this, I wanna see this band live.' And that's all we want—people making up their own minds and not being influenced by people who are victims of received opinions. We've only recently learned that in America major labels are known for major crap. You know what I mean? That middle-of-the-road stuff. I suppose it's a little bit different in Ireland and England. They sign up all the bands and hope for the best."

As singer and rhythm guitarist Eion (say "Owen") McEvoy knows, the band surely wasn't signed for its looks. "I'm not the next Simon Le Bon, and together we are probably the ugliest band in the universe," he has said. Does he think image is finally becoming secondary to music? "Hopefully, signing us is a deliberate new step MCA has taken."

On their MCA debut, *Urban Beaches*, produced by Chris Kimsey (Marillion, the Stones, and *Frampton Comes Alive*), the band exudes that big, seductive, made-for-the-arena quality perfected by U2 and Simple Minds: tight, heavy rhythms, soaring guitar riffs, and heartfelt, anthemlike vocals. Still, Cactus World News is one of the more intense, human bands you'll find in the majors today, and proud of it.

"Onstage, if the audience is really giving everything to the band and the band is giving everything back, you wanna go further, you wanna really go for it. Now what do ya do? You can't turn around and go to a drum machine, 'Tell ya what—reprogram yourself and speed up just a tiny bit.' We want to react against machine music. I predict that in the future, ten years' time, when everything is totally high tech, computer this, computer that, they'll go back and listen to traditional music."

NEWS OF THE WORLD



Joseph Prock

With their big, seductive sound, Cactus World News may be the Next Big Thing. Just don't call them U3.

Article by Sandy Smallens

"Years Later," the band's first single for MCA, which is now receiving limited MTV and AOR airplay, isn't merely a breath of fresh air, it's the whole damn tornado. McEvoy, his semi-acoustic guitar-picking in the intro lending an ethereal feel to the song ("R.E.M. is a band that I have great admiration for"), howls wolflike over the cascading rhythm of nimble bassist Fergal MacAindris and drummer Wayne Sheehy. Kearns punctuates the entire pro-

ceedings with whammy-bar squalls from his guitar that sound a whole lot closer to Echo and the Bunnymen's Will Sargeant than to U2's Edge. "The worst thing that could happen to Cactus World News," says the guitarist, "is if our live music was just refined down to the backbeat. It would just be another rock 'n' roll band. That's the last thing we want."

Like the single, the best songs on *Urban Beaches* match the urgency of the band's music with potent, provocative lyrical content. In most mainstream American music, themes of disillusionment and frustration are found only in the safe context of love songs or, as in Springsteen's "Born in the USA," ignored by a great many listeners. Kearns thinks the big record companies may finally be cottoning to dissatisfaction. "It's human. You suffer from it, I suffer from it. I'm sure the major labels suffer from it as well. Maybe they just realized [in the voice of a hokey American record exec], 'Hold on, I can relate to this.' Why does everything have to be sanitized all

the time? Some people don't give their audience enough credit for their intelligence. People think you have to spell out everything all the time."

"There's definitely new scope for the listener's intelligence in the 1980s," offers McEvoy, "and about time, too." He raises his eyebrows for emphasis. "I like to be provoked a bit when I go out to be entertained. That's what it is when you get up on a stage. If it was strictly a political platform, you wouldn't have the guitar. If it was strictly vaudeville, you wouldn't have interesting lyrics."

The band does well to leave the sermonizing out of their songs. "Years Later," which McEvoy says "looks at what's happened to Dublin in the last ten years or so," conveys melancholy and bitterness without hitting you over the head with it. "We were interested in the changes taking place in

Dublin because we just couldn't understand what was happening," says Kearns. "One time we were traveling in on the public transport, just looking around, and all these buildings were being torn down. And then I saw this shell of a building—just a wall. On it was this big plaque that said OSCAR WILDE LIVED HERE, and I gave the date, right? And it was, like, what the fuck..." His voice trails off.

"It's quicker to build a car park than it is to build a place people can live in," sums up McEvoy. "But 'Years Later' is also about the passing of time and how anybody may feel getting older. Just watching the people around changing."

Whether or not MCA's experiment will work—indeed, whether it's an experiment, a fluke, or a fraud—remains to be seen and heard. With a group average age of 23, there's a lot of time for Cactus World News's bitches to get too small. "On some nights we all might start laughing together and thrash it out at the end," says Kearns. "It's been pretty difficult for us to keep that improvisation and spontaneous aspect to the live show, because sometimes it can go terribly wrong, and we leave ourselves open to massive risks. It either happens in a night or it doesn't. There's nothing worse than when a band walks onstage and you can tell they don't wanna be there." His serious expression softens a bit.

"You better kick our ass if that happens to us." ●

Above: (L-R) singer and rhythm guitarist Eion McEvoy; lead guitarist Frank Kearns; bassist Fergal MacAindris; and drummer Wayne Sheehy.



JAILHOUSE ROCK

Rock 'n' roll has its roots in gospel, blues, R&B, and sometimes behind bars. Rock's rebel music, performed by hell-raisers. Some of the very best—Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, James Brown, Jim Morrison—were part-time jailbirds. It's part of the rock tradition. In the following review, we round up the usual suspects.

Article by Jamie Malanowski

Of all rock 'n' roll's forefathers, Leadbelly was the most jailbound. Born in 1888 in East Texas, Leadbelly rambled around, leading what one biographer called "a primitive and violent life." He did a stretch for assaulting a woman and in 1919, got 30 years for murder. Six years later he sang before the governor, who was so moved that he gave Leadbelly a pardon. Leadbelly learned a lot from this, it seems, because five years afterward he was convicted again, this time in Louisiana, of assault with intent to kill. Four years later, he sang for the governor and won his pardon. "He is a broken man," the governor said. By this time Leadbelly had met Alan and John Lomax, musicologists from Columbia University, who'd been going through the South recording blues and folk songs. In Leadbelly they found the mother lode. They brought him north, and he performed in New York and around the world. He made about 200 recordings for the Library of Congress. In New York he was again convicted of assault and served two years. It's funny to think that a man Alan Lomax described as "swamp primitive, freighted with great sorrow" could write something as soft as "Goodnight, Irene." But when you hear the lyric "Sometimes I live in the country, sometimes I live in town/Sometimes I have a great notion to jump in the river and drown," you hear what Woody Guthrie called "the long, homeless stretches in Leadbelly's spirit," where resided both music and mayhem.

Little Richard, before embracing the Gospel and accepting Christ into his heart, availed himself of many of life's experiences, including a bunch considered illicit. He is like St. Augustine, who sated his worldly appetites for years before opting for a career in the church. There are differences, of course: Little Richard hasn't written an enduring piece of moral philosophy like *The City of God*, and Augustine never knew all the words to "Tutti Frutti." But both have memoirs of their sinful days: Augustine wrote his *Confessions*; Little Richard confessed all to writer Charles White. In that book, Little Richard describes how, as a young man in Macon, Georgia, he came to be arrested:

"There was a lady by the name of Fanny. I used to drive her around so that I could watch people having sex with her. She'd be in the back of the car, the lights on, her legs open, and no panties on. I'd take her



The Prisonaires, opposite: "Hey, man, can you get us some outside gigs?" Above: Johnny Cash researching "Folsom Prison."

around so that the fellers could have sex with her... I used to enjoy seeing that. Well, I went to the gas station, and the gas station man called the police. They put me in jail. Lewd conduct. I wasn't in jail for more than a few days... [My lawyer] told the court, 'This nigger's going to get out of town,' so they let me go, and I left Macon."

Ten months later, Little Richard was signed by Specialty Records and was able to acquire many more rich experiences to use in his memoirs, including being busted in a sweep of a men's room in a Trailways terminal in Long Beach, California, where he was watching men urinate.

Little Willie John was a great soul singer, blessed with a voice stronger than Sam Cooke's and richer than James Brown's. He had a lot of hits on the R&B charts in the late '50s, but he will probably be best remembered because Peggy Lee decided to record "Fever," which he co-wrote.

Little Willie John was indeed little, about five feet tall. It has been implied that his stature had some-

thing to do with why he took to carrying a gun. He should have opted for elevator shoes. In 1968, Little Willie got into an argument with a patron at a supper club he was playing and shot and killed the man. Convicted of manslaughter, he reportedly told the police that if he was jailed, he would die. If that's true, he called it right. Little Willie John died in prison at the age of 31. All this happened in Walla Walla, Washington, which isn't, all things being equal, a place where a soul man would choose to go to his rest.

The cause of death of the author of "Fever" is listed as pneumonia.

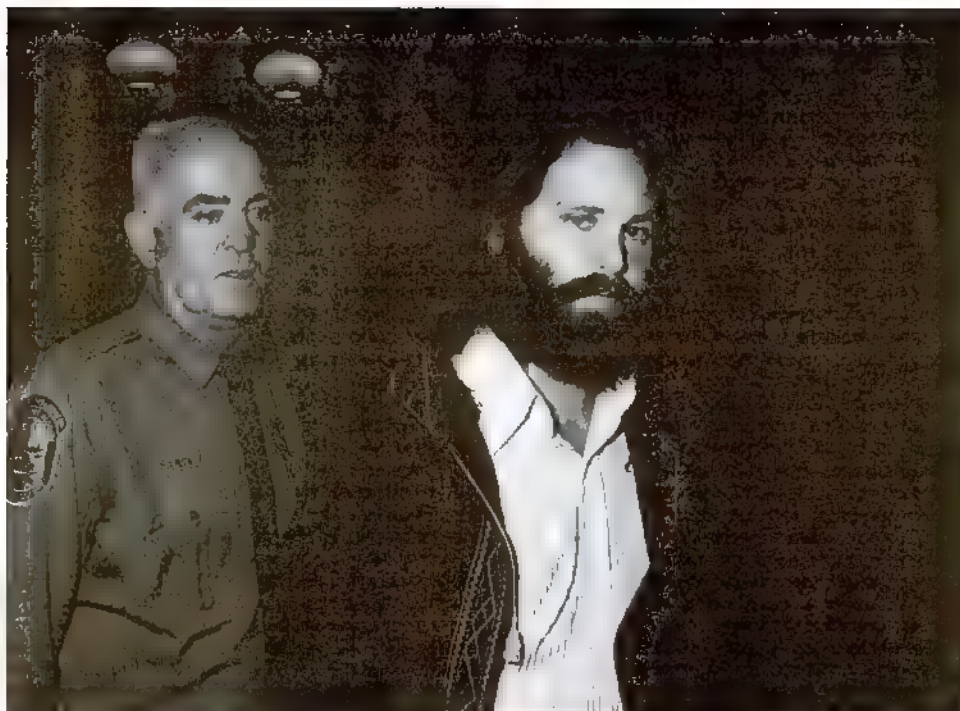
Sam Phillips of Sun Records, not one to let convention come between him and a dollar, recorded some minor hits with the Prisonaires, a quintet of convicts from Tennessee State Prison.

What names for this group do you think Sam rejected? The Singing Cons? The Burglaires? Do you think the fans had copies of band members' mug shots and called them by their numbers? Did Sam have trouble promoting them? "Yeah, Bob, you can have them at your club. They'll be free in four to seven." Four of the five got out of jail and formed a group called the Marigolds, which wilted.

Sun's other criminal product was Johnny Cash. In his autobiography, Cash tells of his "seven one-night stands"—seven arrests, all of which kept him incarcerated for one night. Cash tells these stories with the seriousness of a confession, but a couple are pretty funny. In Carson City, Nevada, for example, a rather beefy cell mate, knowing of Cash's willingness to play prison concerts, menaced Cash into an all-night command performance.

Five of Cash's arrests were for drunkenness; two were for drugs. In El Paso, Texas, Cash was taken off a plane and arrested for possessing barbiturates, which he had purchased in Juarez and smuggled in his guitar case into Texas. This arrest humiliated Cash, but it was the bust in Lafayette, Georgia, in October 1967 that got him to beat his habit.

Cash's first performance at a prison took place on January 1, 1958, at San Quentin. One of the inmates in the audience was Merle Haggard, then serving a sentence for armed robbery. Cash's "Folsom Prison" and Haggard's "Mama Tried" are two of the best jail songs ever written.



Top: Apparently no one around Jim Morrison ever used the words "professional help." Above: Mick Jagger (left) and Keith Richards (right) in 1967: I tried to quit, but I gained a lot of weight.

In 1959 a committee of the US House of Representatives, which had just exposed fraudulent practices involving TV game shows such as *The \$64,000 Question* began an investigation of payola in the music industry. Before long, a lot of DJs were out of work. They were the lucky ones. The unlucky ones were prosecuted.

The most tragic victim of the payola scandal was Alan Freed. Freed has become a legendary figure in rock history because, like all legendary figures, he recognized the essence of what was happening in his world and made himself one with it. His tragic flaw is that he took the money. It's not clear how much quid pro quo was involved. Certainly the sums weren't large enough to persuade Freed to stop playing records by black artists on independent labels and play cover versions by whites instead. But he did take money. Perhaps he thought it was for doing things he would have done anyway. In December 1959, WABC asked Freed to sign a statement swearing that he'd never accepted money or gifts in exchange for play. When Freed refused—"on principle"—and WABC

fired him, he was on the air playing "Shimmy Shimmy Ko Ko Bop."

Freed took a job in LA, and he was there when he was indicted on 26 counts of commercial bribery. In 1962 he pleaded guilty to two of the counts, was fined \$300, and was given a suspended sentence. At that point the IRS took over and indicted him for income-tax evasion, claiming he owed nearly \$38,000 on money gained through payola.

The payola investigations ended when they didn't get Dick Clark. When the scandal broke, Clark had interests in 33 music-related companies, including six publishing companies, three record labels, an artist-management company, and a record-pressing plant. According to his autobiography, these interests were earning him a half million a year. Committee investigators wanted to know how Clark acquired publishing rights to 60 songs that he had not paid for. They wondered why Clark played "Sixteen Candles" on *American Bandstand* four times in the ten weeks before his publishing company was given an interest in the song and 27 times in the 13 weeks that followed. They wondered whether there was a connection between an increase in the number of times he played a record and an order from his pressing plant of 15,000 copies. One congressman called Clark the "top dog in the payola field." People began to use the term "Clarkola."

Things looked bad for Dick. His PR man, Gene Shalit (the same), dropped him. *This Week* magazine canceled his advice column. ABC forced him to choose between staying on *Bandstand* or selling his music interests. Clark chose the tube.

In April 1960, Clark went to Washington. He categorically denied accepting pay for play or even knowing anything about it. The congressmen snapped at him all day, but Clark stayed cool, polite, and confident, and was never bloodied. "I had never thought of it as conflict of interest," Clark testified, and indeed, he may never have. For him it was a confluence of interests, one that made him a rich and happy man in a great country. "You are not the cause of payola," one congressman concluded. "You are its product."

Clark's strongest defense is that in the quarter of a century that has elapsed, no one, not even the wackiest crackpot, has emerged to dispute his

claims. In fact, the only crimes Clark can be cited for are crimes against culture. He built an empire on Fabian, Frankie Avalon, Freddy Cannon, Bobby Rydell, and others so meagerly talented that they should prostrate themselves every day and thank God for their parents' genes, for the emotional responses hormones cause in young girls, and for the vision of Dick Clark. Alan Freed, who brought black and white together, died less than a year after his IRS indictment, broke and broken, at age 43.

In 1975 Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff, the brilliant producers behind the O'Jays, Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes, and the Philadelphia sound, were indicted by a federal grand jury for payola. Huff was cleared, but Gamble was convicted and fined \$2,500. The Republic, being in no further jeopardy, went about its business.

Arlo Guthrie was arrested after a Thanksgiving dinner at the home of Alice Mae Brock in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Guthrie was locked up for trying to deposit the garbage in the town dump, which was closed. He was convicted for littering. He recalled this incident when he took his draft physical, and then was inspired to write a song about it, which he called "The Alice's Restaurant Massacre."

Years from now, Guthries will gather at Thanksgiving and toast the pluck and ingenuity of their great ancestor Arlo, who, by dint of native intelligence, modest musical abilities, and personal amiability, managed to turn the most mundane of events into the family fortune.

Crime does pay.

Nearly 20 years ago, Aretha Franklin recorded a number of songs that remain as attention getting as a locomotive coming at your head. The Queen of Soul has not had a serene personal life, however. One reflection of which was her arrest in July 1969 for being drunk and disorderly and causing a disturbance. She posted a \$50 bond and then ran down a street sign as she left the station.

While male rock stars seem to take their arrests dolefully or stoically, other women besides Aretha have raised hell. In March 1980, Crissie Hynde spent a night in jail in Memphis for drunken behavior; she reacted to her arrest by kicking out the window of a police car. In January 1981 in Milwaukee, Wendy O. Williams of the Plasmatics was busted onstage, on an obscenity rap. She was apparently simulating masturbation with a sledgehammer. She alleged that one of the officers made a "sexual grab" at her, to which she took exception, thus precipitating a large brawl in which Wendy, who took 12 stitches to close a cut above her eye, seems to have been the principal loser.

Joan Baez did some time for advocating draft evasion. A pacifist, she went pacifically.

As David Bromberg tells it, Jerry Jeff Walker was in a bar in New Orleans where he propositioned the "right woman, at the right time, in the wrong place, and her husband, the bartender, called the cops." In the drunk tank, Jerry Jeff met a street dancer, and they struck up a conversation. Upon his release, Jerry Jeff wrote "Mr. Bojangles."

Paul McCartney has spent over 20 years in the public eye, which qualifies us to say that we know some things about the man. First, he's probably the glibbest tunesmith on the planet. Second, he writes really vapid lyrics. Third, he's a weedhead.

Look at the record. March 8, 1973: McCartney fined £100 for growing cannabis on his farm in Scotland. January 16, 1980: McCartney spends ten days in a Tokyo prison after customs officials find a half-pound of marijuana he "absentmindedly" left



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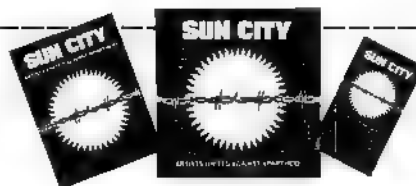
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SUN CITY

ARTISTS UNITED AGAINST APARTHEID

say) left in his suitcase. January 24, 1984: Linda McCartney was fined £75 for smuggling marijuana into England, of all places.

Maybe this explains why he thought "Ebony and Ivory" had meaningful lyrics.

Ringo appears to be the only ex-Beatle without a criminal conviction. In 1960, George Harrison, age 17, was jailed for a night in Hamburg for being underage while working in a foreign country. He was then deported. In March 1969 he and his wife Patti were arrested when police raided their home. The dog that sniffed out the dope was named Yogi, which some people thought amusing, given the amount of time the Beatles had spent with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The police found 120 joints. This happened the day before Paul and Linda were married. Perhaps the joints were wedding presents.

John and Yoko were arrested on October 18, 1968, for possession of marijuana. Lennon pleaded guilty and was fined £150. Several years later, on the basis of this conviction, the Nixon Administration waged a campaign to prevent Lennon from remaining in the United States. In truth, Nixon and his henchmen believed Lennon would be a source of funds and inspiration for the antiwar movement. After a long and costly fight, Lennon won his right to stay. As we sail through a year in which *Newsweek* was moved to announce Nixon's rehabilitation with a cover story entitled, "He's Back," it's worth remembering just how awful Nixon and his minions were.

On February 5, 1967, a tabloid called *News of the World* published an exposé of wild LSD parties at a house rented by members of the Moody Blues, which, the paper said, were attended by Mick Jagger. The paper purportedly interviewed Jagger and reported that he claimed he took LSD, had taken six Benzedrine tablets during the interviews, and had invited the reporter to smoke hash with him. The paper was unlucky: The man the reporter interviewed wasn't Mick Jagger, and a libel suit was in the offing. Lost in the shuffle was the fact that the man who was interviewed was Brian Jones. The paper's only recourse was to prove that even if Jagger hadn't taken drugs as described, he did use drugs. They began tailing him night and day.

On February 11, Jagger, Marianne Faithfull, Patti and George Harrison, an art dealer named Robert Fraser, and six other guests spent the day at Keith Richards's home. Most of the day was devoted to tripping. At about 6 PM, the Harrisons left and the rest of the party, eight men and Marianne Faithfull, who was wearing nothing but a very large fur bedspread, gathered in the living room to listen to Dylan records and watch a movie—*Pete Kelly's Blues* with Jack Webb—on TV. Around 7:30 the police, 19 in all, came storming in. It is widely presumed that whoever tipped off the cops waited until the member of the still-sacrosanct Beatles had departed.

The police found four uppers belonging to Faithfull, which Jagger claimed were his; 24 heroin tablets belonging to Fraser; and a tin of marijuana belonging to a guest named Schneiderman, who reportedly had supplied the acid used that day and who supposedly was the stoolie. Police contended that Faithfull allowed her rug to slip provocatively from time to time during the raid.

Between the time of the arrest and the bail hearing on May 10, several interesting events took place. Jagger and Richards contributed a total of £5,000 towards a £7,000 bribe, aimed at someone in Scotland Yard who was to lose the evidence. The money went for naught. Second, in an attempt to discern whether Schneiderman or another guest, Nicky Cramer, was the tipster, a mutual friend of Jagger and Richards's named David Litvinoff brutally beat Cramer. When he still wouldn't confess, he was deemed innocent.

The Jagger-Richards-Fraser case went to trial on June 27. Jagger's defense rested on the testimony of

a physician, who claimed that he had okayed by phone Mick's continued use of the pills, which Jagger claimed he had obtained in Europe, where they were sold legally. In other words, the doctor committed perjury. The pills, after all, weren't even Mick's. No matter—the court ruled that it wasn't a legal prescription and found Jagger guilty. Fraser then pleaded guilty and, citing his distinguished military record, threw himself on the mercy of the court.

Jagger spent the night in Lewes Prison, where Faithfull visited him, bringing cigarettes, fruit, newspapers, and a checkerboard. Jagger, in his words, was "deathly scared and in tears."

Richards was tried for letting drugs be taken in his home. The prosecution made much of Faithfull's lack of clothing. The prosecutor asked Richards if he didn't think it was unusual that Marianne wasn't embarrassed, given that she was in the presence of eight men—and here the imperial mindset is revealed—"two of whom were hangers-on and one a Moroccan servant."

Keith didn't. "We are not old men," he said. "We're not worried about petty morals." He was given a year, Fraser six months, and Jagger three months. The next morning the Stones' attorney appeared before an appeals judge named Lord Diplock and got them out. Diplock, who refused to grant bail for Fraser, would go on to fame as the man who okayed the British Army's practice of incarcerating, without charge or sentence, suspected members of the IRA.

On July 31 the Lord Chief Justice of England quashed Richards's conviction, citing lack of evidence. Jagger's conviction was upheld, but his sentence was changed to 12 months probation. Fraser was left to do his six months the hard way.

Jagger wrote a song about his stay in prison called "2,000 Light Years From Home." Having thus acknowledged in this minor work how shaken and ashamed—"afraid and in tears"—he was, Jagger has since refrained from exploring vulnerability (his, anyway) in his music. But then, given the Stones' subsequent brushes with the law—Mick and Marianne busted for pot in 1968, given a slap-on-the-wrist fine; Brian Jones convicted of possession in 1967, his nine-month sentence commuted on appeal to a £1,000 fine; Keith Richards arrested in Toronto on a felony count of possession for purposes of trafficking, allowed to plead guilty to a lesser count, and ordered to play a benefit concert—maybe the Stones



An uncharacteristically clothed Wendy O. Williams before her 1982 court appearance on an obscenity charge.

are invulnerable.

The Godfather of Soul was a JD. He stole, although Geri Hirshey, in her book *Nowhere to Run*, avers that Mr. Please Please Please usually did it for benign reasons, taking sneakers and clothes that other kids needed. Sure. Apparently one kid needed a car battery, since on a night in 1949 in Augusta, Georgia, the Hardest Working Man in Show Business got caught breaking into automobiles.

The court records are perfunctory: "James Brown waives copy of indictment, list of witnesses, full panel, formal arraignment, and pleads guilty." He did three years in a juvenile correction facility.

One of James Brown's first hits was called "Prisoner of Love."

Two members of the Lovin' Spoonful, Steve Boone and Zal Yanovsky, were busted in Berkeley for dope. They cut a deal, it seems, and in exchange for not being prosecuted they introduced a narc, not to a dealer, but to a friend, who bought dope from the narc and then was busted. After this was publicized, there were calls to boycott the group. The band's next and last record was without Yanovsky. John Sebastian explained the group's breakup by saying, "It wasn't fun anymore. We could have gone on and collected the really big sums we were just starting to get. Lots of people brought us down." Yeah, it was probably a real bummer to have all conversation stop whenever one of the band members walked by.

Another folk rocker, John Phillips of the Mama and the Papas, was convicted in 1981 of dealing. His eight-year conviction was reduced to 30 days plus 250 hours of community service. He has recently written his memoirs, in which he confesses not only his crimes and indiscretions, but also some of those committed by friends of his, and he includes an allusion to sexcapades involving himself, Michelle Phillips, Jane Fonda, Roger Vadim, and Warren Beatty. Doesn't just reading about this guy make you

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JIMMY

Possibly the thing that most upsets Jimmy Swaggart about rock is he didn't think to attack it sooner.

Article by Elisabeth Wynhausen Illustration by Ori Hofmekler

"Of all the unsavory influences operating in the United States today, the music business has perhaps the widest-ranging effect on the minds and morals of the young people of this nation. Anyone with even the briefest exposure to today's commercial music industry can't escape the realization that this is an area which has been completely subverted by Satan..."

—Jimmy Swaggart, *Music: The New Pornography* 1:3

Someone put me on hold and over the telephone from Brother Jimmy Lee Swaggart's headquarters in Baton Rouge, I heard music. Gospel music. It was Brother Swaggart himself singing "Sweet Anointing." The sound has a spectral familiarity, like an echo it takes a while to place.

A long time before anyone outside Ferriday, Louisiana (pop. 5,152), had heard of either of them, Jimmy Swaggart used to play duets on the piano with his cousin, Jerry Lee Lewis. Lewis is right up there with Elvis, Chuck Berry, and Little Richard, the apostles of rock 'n' roll, but the way the fundamentalists tell it is that Jerry Lee was anointed by the devil and Jimmy Lee was anointed by the Lord.

Swaggart, a television evangelist, says that he reaches 90 million people around the world, and even if that is an extravagant claim, his followers sent in \$150 million last year, and that's fact. According to the Arbitron ratings, he's the most popular TV preacher in America. Somewhere around 2 million households switch on the show, if only because Swaggart still looks as if he sweats.

Televangelists like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson have all the oily conviction of someone about to sell you a patch of swamp in Paradise, Florida. They are smoothed-down, suave, and smug. They may be preaching hellfire and damnation, but you can't help wondering when they'll interrupt themselves to talk about the last time they went to the White House.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Swaggart seems to be in danger of hyperventilating more often than any tent-show holy roller. He'll be hollering at the devil one minute and blubbering (or at least reaching for his handkerchief) the next. But wrapped up in this peerless performance is the usual fundamentalist formula.

"I'm sick of evolution, secular humanism, materialism, and communism... I'm sick of putrid, pathetic, pukish pulp that passes for entertainment..." he intones. At other times he has said that "homosexuals are worthy of death," that Catholics won't go to heaven, and that dancing is a sin. Swaggart seems to want to Christianize America according to his own blueprint for salvation, and not long ago, he scored an unexpected hit.

On a show in June he mentioned an article in *Hit Parade* about an unnamed rock group "noted for its perverted... actions," going on to observe that *Hit Parade* can be "bought by children of all ages at places like Wal-Mart, K Mart, the grocery store, and practically any other store that sells magazines. The smut business has moved out of the back alleys and

the adult bookstores into your family convenience stores..."

"The average age of those tuned to rock 'roll is thirteen. Now pause for a moment and think what that means. Boys and girls of ten, twelve, thirteen and fifteen are being led down the path to total destruction. This moral disintegration is so severe that it can climax in their total dissolution in a matter of months, or at most a year or two..."

—*Music: The New Pornography* 5:10

Publicists for Wal-Mart, a chain of 890 discount variety stores, denied any connection, but within two weeks, wholesalers supplying the stores had been told to stop sending them all "rock-oriented" magazines. SPIN was on the blacklist, though it was not authorized for sale in Wal-Mart stores.

Swaggart was jubilant about Wal-Mart's reaction. He believes that anything associated with rock music ought to be banned.

"Mah family helped start rock 'n' roll," he told me over the telephone from Baton Rouge, "... but it's degenerated from those early '50s to what we're seeing today.

"A lot of the mass suicides we're seeing here in the United States, ah should say teenage suicides that come in clusters, are encouraged, ah b'lieve, by rock music. Ah think it's 55 percent of the black babies born in America is born out-of-wedlock, and about 20-something percent of all babies born in our nation are born out-of-wedlock, and ah think rock music is probably not the sole reason for it, but has contributed heavily t'ward it."

Jimmy Swaggart is certainly not alone in making this connection: in 1975, a preacher in Tallahassee set fire to hundreds of rock records, saying he was provoked by a local poll supposedly showing that 984 unmarried mothers who were interviewed fell pregnant while listening to rock music.

But Swaggart was just getting warmed up. "Ah feel that rock 'n' roll music, and all the subsidiaries, or shoot-offs, or whatever you'd want to call it, such as magazines and so forth, is definitely not any good for public consumption and has been in part at least the cause of an awful lot of difficulty and problems in our nation and any nation in the world where it is somewhat predominant.

"It fosters rebellion, alcoholism, drug addiction, illicit sex, pornography... There's not, as far as I can see it, any good whatsoever that can be said about rock music, and the destruction that it leaves in its wake is devastating.

"It is so bad that Congress here in the United States is trying to find some way to censor—I know that word is a terrible word in the media—to censor some of the lyrics that are listened to by children eight, nine, ten years old, because they encourage drug addiction, illicit sex and ever'thing else..."

Before there was time to ask Swaggart about the evidence, he was up to necrophilia. "The kids play these things day 'n' night, over 'n' over, and the lyrics encourage premarital sex, homosexuality, bestiality, they encourage necrophilia, which is

having sex with a dead body, ever'thing you can think of that's wrong."

It's not that Swaggart means to play fast and loose with the facts. Well, not exactly. It's just that he wants us to see it all his way, in black and white.

At his headquarters in Baton Rouge, a complex of buildings on a hundred-acre spread, a computerized printing press churns out 24 million copies of pamphlets with titles like "When God Fights Russia" and "Abortion: America's Greatest Crime." His opinions are spelled out from month-to-month in *The Evangelist*, a magazine with about a million subscribers. His sentiments are reiterated in his gospel records, which have sold some 13 million copies. But his masterpiece may be his pamphlet on rock 'n' roll, *Music: The New Pornography*.

"Any Christian who would allow any type of rock or country recording in his home is inviting in the powers of darkness. By compromising with this satanic influence, overt control of the mind and spirit is possible. Anyone listening to this filth is openly entering into communion with evil spirits."

"All of the rock music (and probably all, or at least most, of the country music) being aired today is demonically inspired. Any individual listening to it is entering into communion with a wickedness and evil spawned in hell."

—*Music, The New Pornography* 7:14

So much for Willie Nelson. Exceptions only weaken the case and the fundamentalists are nothing if not literal-minded. In Swaggart's autobiography, he tells of the conversations he's had with God when he came to one or another moral dilemma.

In the old days, before God saw fit to lead Brother Swaggart into a TV studio, he was just a travelling preacher tooling around in a tan-and-white automobile Jerry Lee Lewis gave him. His audiences grew until there were few Assembly of God churches large enough to contain them. The critical moment came when he found himself preaching almost lifelessly.

"... 'Lord, why?' I asked.

"The Lord answered quickly, 'Son, I've been telling you for the last six months to leave the churches and go into the city auditoriums. You can stay here and die if you want, or you can do what I've told you.'

"'Lord', I replied, wiping my eyes, 'I wouldn't go through this again for a million dollars. I'll obey you.'"

Apart from being shrewd, Swaggart's Great Communicator was conveniently contemporary in outlook and he was soon "prodding" the preacher to get into television. The first few tapings were disastrous and Swaggart kept announcing that he couldn't do it. He was on the way to church one evening when God had another word with him.

"... 'The next time you say you can't do something I've told you to do, I'm going to count it a sin...' I looked out the window. The Lord didn't have to tell me he was talking about television—I knew it."

TIMMY
HONOLULU

FACTIVE
SALOON



ATLANTA, WHO MURDERED YOUR CHILDREN?

As a high-level secret investigation of the possible role of the Ku Klux Klan in the Atlanta child murders prepared to make arrests, its key informant was exposed, the case suddenly and mysteriously terminated, and valuable evidence destroyed. In part two of "A Question of Justice," we examine the disturbing end of this extraordinary investigation.

Article by Robert Keating

The Sanders family wasn't supposed to be at the Dixie Airport Motel—a two-bit one-night spot on the outskirts of Atlanta—at least not at the same time as BJ Jones (the code name of a confidential informant for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation). But there was Jerry Sanders, looking as if he was high on pills, according to Jones, and rambling on at poolside about his family, the Ku Klux Klan, and the murders of black children in Atlanta. As Jones would later recall in a report filed in court, Jerry's brother Charles arrived shortly afterwards, and Jerry said outright that he thought everybody knew they got Lubie Geter—one of the 23 black children of Atlanta who at the time had been officially listed as murdered.

Charles quickly changed the conversation to their plans to blow up a synagogue on Clairmont St., in Atlanta, and Jerry left shortly after with his girlfriend, who had been swimming nearby. BJ Jones set off to relay Jerry's extraordinary statement to Detective Aubrey Melton, his police contact. But to BJ's frustration, as he sat talking to Melton at the Valles Restaurant on I-75 in Cleveland, Georgia, outside Atlanta, he discovered that the investigation of the Sanderses, who were suspected of being involved in the Atlanta child murders, had been inexplicably closed several days before. In fact, Melton and his partner, Detective RC McClendon—cops who had brought the case to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) and who were key participants all through the investigation—were barely let in on the case's closing moments. Simply put, the GBI had wrested the investigation away from them and terminated it.

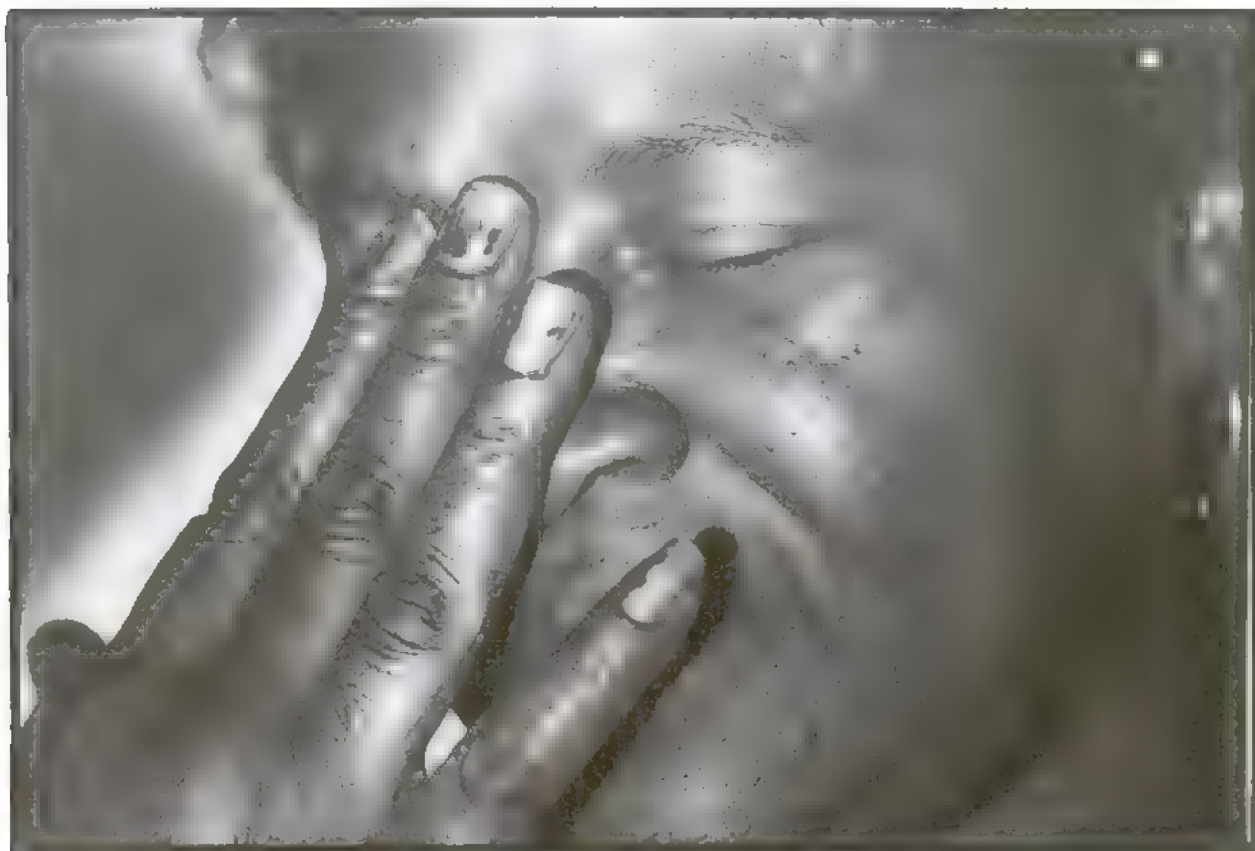
So BJ Jones had nowhere to go with this information, and it quietly disappeared, along with the other evidence that had brought police close to arresting members of the Ku Klux Klan who were suspected of being involved in several of the Atlanta child murders.

"I was convinced that there was something there," Melton says today.

"Up until the very end I believed the Sanderses had something to do with some of the murders," says McClendon. "It's still an unresolved question in my mind. It's an open issue with me still."

Over the past several months, SPIN has assembled a startling portrait of how perhaps the most significant and dramatic investigation into serial murders in history was crippled from the onset and doomed to failure. Dozens of interviews in and outside Georgia, volumes of court documents, FBI files, and depositions never before disclosed to the public show a careless investigation weighed down by petty rivalries among law enforcement agencies, inept agents and cops, impatient administrators, and the deliberate withholding and destruction of valuable evidence, not only regarding the murder cases but also involving other major criminal activity. All of this was hidden from scrutiny behind both the thin veil that is the conviction of Wayne Bertram Williams for the murders of two adults and the deliberate coverup by top Georgia and Atlanta law enforcement officials of evidence that there were possibly other killers.

Sometime in the next few months, lawyers for Wayne Williams, in efforts to overturn his conviction, plan to present to the Georgia courts further evidence supporting a writ of habeas corpus. They contend that Williams did not receive a fair trial because his defense team was denied access to large amounts of exculpatory testimony. They also claim that evidence was denied Williams's defense, along with other information that would have impeached witnesses for the prosecution, several of whom concealed their own criminal background or testified under aliases, or gave the jury testimony that clearly contradicted their original statements to the police. If successful, these court motions could win Williams release or a new trial. At the least, they confirm many of



the doubts and suspicions that have long haunted this southern city in regard to the worst passage of its troubled history—the 23 months that officially contained the Atlanta child murders.

A crack legal team made up of Lynn Whatley and Bobby Lee Cook of Georgia, William Kunstler of New York, and Alan Dershowitz from Cambridge are bringing to court an amazing account from a long buried police file that was brought to them anonymously—detailing a secret investigation into the more than 30 murders of black children. The facts which were intentionally hidden may have proven critical in the defense of Williams. But the greatest impact of this file is that it undermines the credibility of the overall investigation into the Atlanta child murders, in which justice may have taken a backseat to practicality or, sadiy, some more sinister motive.

The official investigation into the Atlanta child murders began in July 1980 as a five-man task force, but by Christmas it had grown to include 14 different law enforcement agencies, several hundred investigators, all in a blind race, funded by millions of dollars, to be the first to solve the continuing murders. Instead, what they created was a quagmire of competitive agencies, refusing to share information, accusing each other of making mistakes, and allowing large amounts of information to fall through the many cracks in their alliance.

For example:

- The FBI discovered a child's bloody clothes in a dumpster beside a car wash, but never shared this find with the task force.

- One top police official arrived at the scene where a child's body was discovered and immediately began disrupting the remains of the victim before the medical examiner arrived to conduct proper analysis.

- After Wayne Williams was stopped for presumably throwing something thought to be a body off of a bridge, the FBI suddenly jumped the gun on the other agencies and picked him up for a private interrogation.

- The Atlanta FBI office wired an embarrassed cable to FBI director William Webster on June 21, 1981, stating that two Fulton County detectives had arrested Williams at his home and that the "Atlanta FBI was totally unaware of the above proceedings."

- Because Atlanta sits in four separate counties, some cases, while connected to the others, sometimes fell under a different police agency. This turned into a jurisdictional nightmare. Connections between the children and their murders were often missed because different investigators and medical examiners followed divergent leads in deaths that were remarkably associated. For example, Patrick Roger's body was discovered, examined, and his murder investigated in Cobb County while Arron Wyche was found dead and his case handled in DeKalb County, even though Rogers lived just 25 yards away from Wyche in a third

county.

Despite the many mistakes and intentional withholdings, a massive amount of material was gathered. The task force's records alone fill 14 file cabinets. The FBI assembled thousands of pages of eyewitness reports, lab tests, and investigative research. Community activists combed the streets themselves and hired private investigators who uncovered leads that revealed that a number of the children were involved in child prostitution rings and frequented the homes of homosexual child pornographers.

But on February 18, 1981, still another investigation into the murders began when Inspector Aubrey Melton of the Atlanta Police Intelligence Unit heard an informant he had worked with for 18 years, BJ Jones, report an amazing and highly detailed account of the apparent involvement of members of the Ku Klux Klan in the continuing murders of the black children of Atlanta. BJ told of how he first met a man named Charles Theodore Sanders at a friend's house in Lakewood Heights, Georgia, and soon found himself being recruited to use his expertise in explosives and alarm systems to help break into several National Guard armories to steal heavy weaponry.

The agony of Atlanta's mothers: Willie Mae Mathis learns that her son, 10-year-old Jefferey, who had left to do an errand and was seen getting into a blue car, has been found murdered.



Taken on a tour of various Klan members' homes and introduced to Sanders's many brothers, BJ saw numerous caches of M16 rifles, bazookas, hand grenades, machetes, and plastic explosives. There was also a wide assortment of uniforms: police, Coca-Cola, Purolator, and others.

This was powerful stuff, but BJ went on to tell Melton the most disturbing part of what he'd discovered. According to Melton's notes, which SPIN discovered in court papers:

"Source advised that Sanders related to him that they (KKK) were creating an uprising among the blacks in Atlanta and that they were killing the children—that they were going to do one each month until things blow up. . . . Source explained that Charles Sanders told him that he was going to kill the Geter boy, that this was prior to Christmas 1980. Then the kid came up missing, and I know he did it. . . . sometime prior back in early summer . . . the Geter boy and another black kid was [in Lakewood Heights] playing with a go-cart—Charles Sanders came by—parked his car in the street and the Geter boy ran the go-cart into his car—Source related that Charles Sanders blew his top about it. . . . This was a long time before he said that he was going to kill him . . . after he tried to get me to help [break into the armories]—he pointed at Geter and said—See that little black bastard?—I'm going to get him—I'm gonna kill him—I'm gonna choke the black bastard to death."

On January 3, 1981, 14-year-old Lubie Geter disappeared from the Stewart-Lakewood shopping mall, where he had been selling car fresheners, a short distance from where the go-cart incident had

happened.

On January 9 the skeletal remains of the other black boy in the go-cart incident, 11-year-old Earl Terrel—along with that of another boy, 11-year-old Christopher Richardson—were discovered. Terrel had been last seen about a month after the confrontation with Charles Sanders outside a swimming pool, also a short distance from the Stewart-Lakewood mall.

When BJ heard that the strangled body of Lubie Geter—badly mutilated, supposedly by wild animals—was discovered by a man walking his dog, he placed a call to his friend in police intelligence.

As a result of Melton's information, in the closing days of February, high-level meetings were held in the offices of then Georgia Bureau of Investigation director Phil Peters. A decision was made to launch an investigation into the activities of seven members of the Sanders family: father Carlton and his sons Don, Jerry, Terry, James, Charles, and Ricky, a violent and unpredictable group with lengthy criminal records. Peters stressed that the investigation was sensitive and that if information leaked out it could cause a race riot. To prevent this, Peters announced that this investigation would be conducted in secret—separate from the task force set up by the Atlanta police to investigate the murdered and missing children. After the explosive racial situation was fully discussed, details of intelligence reviewed, and theories kicked around, the GBI got down to wiring BJ Jones, who had agreed to go "under" for the agency.

The GBI investigation began in earnest on March 4, 1981, largely conducted by seasoned detectives Melton and McClendon. Noting license plates and

vehicle descriptions, along with the comings and goings of individuals, the two soon pieced together a portrait of the subterranean world in which the Sanderses and some of their friends lived and operated. Their homes within short distances of each other, they shared long hours together at one or another of their places. They even shared each other's cars.

Soon, this apparently close southern family took on the appearance of a crime machine. Among them they had been convicted of burglary, beating up police officers, statutory rape, armed robbery, auto theft, prison escape, and wife beating. According to court papers, Jones was wired with electronic recorders, stepped into this family's turf, and began taping Charles Sanders's deals for M16 rifles and fragmentation grenades. The supplier, as it turned out, was a clavern leader in the KKK who was also a confidential informant for the GBI, who had just set up a 1,000-pound marijuana bust and was now arranging the sale of a large cache of M16 rifles to a Klan buyer in Atlanta. BJ's reports were corroborated by the surprise appearance of this second informant. He was tipping the GBI, because, he told an agent, "he just did not like what the KKK was doing and that they were going to hurt some innocent people and children."

Jones was also recorded talking with Jerry Sanders in a car at a motel parking lot, negotiating the price of automatic weapons, figuring how many people a fragmentation grenade could kill, and chatting about Klan

In early 1981, the frequency of the murders of young black boys increased to more than one a month.

business. "I am a member," said Jerry. "You should be—every white should be."

As the Sanderses continued trying to secure heavy arms, GBI director Peters and his special squad on this investigation received a tape of a telephone conversation between BJ Jones, Don and Charles Sanders, and Dr. Edward Fields, head of the National States Rights Party, described by police as one of the most violent factions of the Klan, in which Fields, according to Melton's notes, authorized Sanders to purchase weapons.

This startling conversation between Don Sanders and Fields nearly overshadowed the discovery of crucial evidence that the investigators had been instructed to watch for—the Siberian husky playing day after day in Charles Sanders's yard. Dog hairs believed to have been from a Siberian husky had been found on 15 or more of the murdered children.

GBI reports filed in court describe stalled arms deals and "narcotic trafficking on a much larger scale than investigators had believed," which continued through late March, when a court-ordered wiretap was placed on the phone of Don Sanders and two of his brothers. On average, one out of every eight calls monitored was of a criminal nature, but one call stood out: Late one night, the GBI reported, Don was heard to tell Terry: "I might go out and ride around a little bit . . ."

"Go find you another kid," responded Terry, "another little kid?"

"Yeah," said Don, "scope out some places, we'll see you later—"

Meanwhile, task force lab tests on the body of 12-year-old Charles Stephens, who had turned up dead the previous autumn at a trailer park frequented by the Sanderses, again revealed the dog hairs but this time the lab found something else—Caucasian head hairs.

The GBI stepped up the pace of its investigation into the Sanderses. Sometime in April, according to Melton's notes in court, the GBI agent in charge of the investigation, Joe Jackson, decided to abandon the patient surveillance and interrogate Charles Sanders. On April 21, GBI inspector Robert Ingram summoned Detective Melton to his office to fill out applications for search and arrest warrants.

But as Melton waited at the GBI to meet with Ingram, strange things began to happen. Ingram first postponed their meeting and then, late that afternoon, inexplicably reversed his position. The investigation would continue without search or arrest warrants.

When he returned to his office, Melton found several urgent messages from BJ, who was frantically trying to get in touch with him. They arranged to meet. When Melton reached him, BJ was angry and bitter. Someone had blown his cover. Horrified, Melton immediately arranged a meeting. Melton's notes, which were filed in court, recreate the conversation:

"Are you working with anyone named Joe Jackson?" asked BJ.

Melton explained that Jackson was running the investigation.

"Well, why would he want to mess me up?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, Jackson told Charles what I am doing."

"How do you know?"

"Well, I called Charles about eleven o'clock. He said I was working for Joe Jackson."

Melton stared in shocked disbelief at this man who had been his confidential informant for 18 years. Once before he had shared an informant with other investigators. That man had walked out his front door early one morning, started up his car, and was blown to pieces. Being an informant is a dangerous undertaking, even if your cover's never blown. When it is, it's deadly. Calmly, Aubrey Melton asked BJ exactly what Charles said and how it came about.

"I called Charles. Asked him if he wanted any Demerol. Told him I had some."

"I don't want nothing you have," answered Sanders.

"What do you mean?" asked BJ.



According to the informant, Jerry Sanders was high on pills and said he thought everyone knew they got Geter, one of the black children found murdered.



As Mayor Maynard Jackson (bottom) appealed for outside help in solving the case, confusion reigned among the law enforcement agencies investigating the murders as they competed to break the case and withheld information from one another.

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children in Atlanta.

Cook: Was there anything in your investigation that resulted, in your opinion, in [BJ] becoming not reliable? And if so, what?

Jackson: All right, sir, I feel and I felt then and I feel today that [BJ] was being essentially truthful with the information that he relayed to Mr. Melton. I just think that it was inaccurate and totally unfounded.

Cook: But it is your opinion then and now that what [BJ] told Mr. Melton was the truth?

Jackson: I feel that the items he related to Mr. Melton, which we have gone over here—

Cook: Yes.

Jackson: —I think that he thought, “he” being the source, thought that parts of it were true.

Cook: That wasn’t what you said.

Jackson’s lawyer interrupts: Yes, sir, that is what he said.

Jackson: The information that I found to be untrue that was related to Investigator Melton was that these persons, being the Sanders family, were not involved in killing the kids—the children of Atlanta.

But this exchange, as does the manner of the interviews of the Sanderses themselves, begs for a fuller explanation. If Jackson believed that the informant BJ “was being essentially truthful with the information that he relayed to Mr. Melton,” then how could Jackson follow this with the assertion that the information “was inaccurate and totally unfounded?” Exactly what did Jackson believe was unfounded? That BJ and another informant had overheard a member of the Sanders family discussing his plans to foment a race war in Atlanta? That BJ had heard Jerry say he was going to strangle Lubie Geter just weeks before he turned up dead of strangulation? That Don Sanders was heard on tape admitting he was going to find “another little kid?”

While he admits that he believed that the Sanders lied to him about their illegal and criminal activities, by his own testimony his interrogations about the murdered children produced little more than a predictable denial from them. His interview with Charles Sanders, in fact, lasted one hour.

The cumulative effect of the interview was to permit Jackson to recommend that the case be closed on the basis of a denial of the Sanderses of any involvement in the murders.

On Sunday, June 21, task force investigators arrested Wayne Williams and within days he was charged with the murder of two men, Nathaniel Cater and Jimmy Ray Payne, and was tied to the murders of ten young boys included on the official list of 28 murders.

Sentiment grew in Atlanta that Williams was the Atlanta child murderer. His defense team, led by Mary Welcome, a popular Atlanta attorney, and Al Binder, struggled to assemble their case against the machine of anger, resentment, and embarrassment among the mothers of the dead boys, the various law enforcement agencies competing for credit in solving the case, and local officials who wanted the case quickly resolved and done with.

Lurid headlines filled the Atlanta papers as Welcome and Binder tried to prepare their case that suffered from insufficient funds and legal assistance. Even as Welcome and Binder tried to find leads to the identity of the real killers or any evidence that might help their client, the GBI remained silent about its investigation.

It was an extraordinary silence, but not nearly as devastating as what Joe Jackson did next.

On the morning of July 31, Jackson walked into the evidence room at GBI headquarters, requested the tapes of conversations between the informants and the Sanderses, along with explosives BJ had purchased from the Sanderses, and destroyed them.

For five years, Jackson’s actions have avoided scrutiny until just recently, largely because all of the key tapes had been destroyed, and there were apparently



no copies or transcripts of the tapes in existence.

But a transcript did exist. Detective Melton had kept meticulous notes on the investigation, including long-hand transcripts of key conversations from the tapes.

Bobby Cook was frustrated with Joe Jackson. “I asked you at the last deposition as to what had happened to those tape recordings—whether they had been destroyed or not. And at one point in time, you said you thought they were destroyed, but you were not sure; and then you replied, ‘I don’t recall that they were destroyed during the investigation,’ and then you said, ‘Well, I am not sure that they were destroyed; I don’t know where they are, and I can only assume that they were destroyed.’ You remember that.”

As Cook continued the long and often bitter struggle to determine what happened to the tapes and when, Jackson’s answers became a compendium of forgetting, denial, and passing the blame. When Cook’s direct questions about the tapes produced from Jackson only vague and hazy recollections of what happened to them, Cook, believing they might still exist, ordered Jackson to produce GBI records of the recordings. Jackson presented four file cards that had been used to catalog the tapes. Examining the cards, Cook found at the bottom of each this notation:

“CASE CLOSED, EVIDENCE DESTROYED”

And next to that were the initials of the person responsible for destroying the evidence: [J.B.]—Joe Bledsoe Jackson.

Jackson’s actions were a departure from the usual procedure. Normally, the GBI, as Jackson himself testified, kept such evidence from a year to three years before destroying it. Jackson’s action seemed to be for no specific reason. He had apparently simply walked into the evidence room and destroyed the key tapes. Why?

Again and again, as he was confronted with this evidence, Jackson made these claims: “I don’t—today, I don’t have the recollection that I did it,” “I can only guess or assume that Mr. Ingram [Jackson’s immediate superior] instructed me to destroy it,” “[The tapes and explosives] were of no evidentiary value.” Even when faced with his signature and his handwriting of the date on which evidence was destroyed, Jackson

denied any certain knowledge. Finally, the exchange reached the point of absurdity:

Cook: And cassette tape CI-03-199 [the code number of the informant BJ]—do you know what that was?

Jackson: No, sir, I don’t.

Cook: Do you know where it came from?

Jackson: No, sir, I don’t.

Cook: Do you know what it contained?

Jackson: No, at this time, no.

Cook: Did you know what it contained then?

Jackson: I don’t remember.

Jackson, through whom all information gathered in the case was presented, to whom detectives Melton and McClendon reported all findings, who conducted all of the interviews with the primary suspects, and who, in the end, held the power to recommend that the case be closed, claimed not to remember if he ever knew what was contained on a crucial tape in the investigation.

Even given the lapse of five years, isn’t it rather odd that an experienced investigator involved in the most extensive murder investigation of the twentieth century doesn’t remember whether or not he heard tape recordings containing crucial information about the case? If in fact he did not listen to the tapes before interviewing the Sanders, it would have been extraordinarily inept or derelict of agent Jackson.

Other questions surface: Why did the GBI fail to pursue other serious criminal activities by the Sanderses? Could the investigation have been so narrowly focused that open purchase and sale of narcotics by several of the Sanderses could simply be dropped?

BJ, the Atlanta police informant, regularly sold narcotics to the Sanderses, according to court papers, and with them arranged the buying and selling of drugs. He also purchased explosives. And remember, the second informant, who was a GBI operative and a

continued on p.87

Children playing at the McDaniel-Glenn housing project from where many of the murdered children disappeared.



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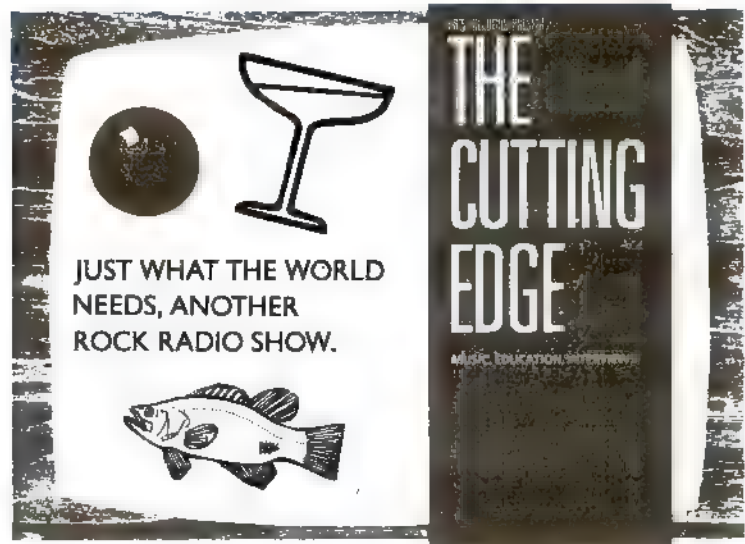
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*Formerly SPIN Radio Concert, and SPIN Radio Underground.

don't have any contact with the real world. So I started working one day a week at Wuxtry's, the record store I used to manage. I take my pay in records."

"What was your goal with *Lifes Rich Pageant*?"
"We wanted to make more of a rock 'n' roll album. Not like Mötley Crüe, but like us. The last one was a bit too moody, and there was too much pressure on us. Now our main responsibility is to ourselves. If we please ourselves, then hopefully we'll satisfy others. I would never take an endorsement from a beer company. There might come a time when we have to, there's nothing wrong with it, but I'd still feel like a whore."

Buck is very apologetic. "I feel like I haven't been making sense. I've been all nervous and discombobulated about my father. The girl I've been dating for six years broke up with me last Saturday. It's been one helluva week."

Green Grow the Rushes

The rehearsal over, Berry invites me to go fishing. It's his 28th birthday. Like the rest of R.E.M., Berry has a southern twang that only appears on certain vowel sounds, such as "away." I ask where he's from. "I was born in Deluth, Minnesota, home of Bobby Dylan," he kiddingly boasts. "Then I moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, then parts of Ohio, then Macon, Georgia, then moved to Athens in '79." His parents moved to Macon on the town's very first day of busing. (Macon was one of the most tumultuous towns for trying out integration.) Berry obviously relishes telling stories, and I realize the animated quality of the southern voice. Whereas a northerner might raise or lower his voice for emphasis, the southern voice has a much broader pitch scale. Even though Berry's tone might not be Dixie regulation, his cadence and timing are.

I ask if he had ever found himself in a race fight.
"Yeah. I was kinda interested in this black girl, and she was kinda interested in me. We would sit around the lunchroom discussing things. And it wasn't long before she suddenly stopped paying attention to me. The day after she wouldn't even talk to me, six black guys jumped me and beat me up."

"How long have you known Mike Mills?"
"Me and Mike were in bands together as far back as high school. We had our first apartment together. Mike was working in Sears after being a star student in high school. He was quite a bright boy. And I was working as a gofer for Ian Copeland's booking agency, which still books for us today. One night, over Mexican food, Mike and I decided to enroll at the University of Georgia. I wasn't motivated to do as well as I should have. And then we met Pete and Michael as a fluke to form a band. I look back on it now and I think, 'God, I'm glad I got out of the music business.' I mean, this little spot I don't mind filling, but that's it."

"What could you do if things fell apart?"
"I would go back to school. I never finished. I think I now write songs well enough that I would want to write and produce for other artists. I could see myself in the artier fields, maybe photography, or the other visual arts, 'cause I have a flair for that. It is something I've thought about because here I am on my twenty-eighth birthday, my hair is falling out, and I can't see myself being bald and playing drums onstage. The hair in the shower drain every morning does concern me."

"Does Michael worry?"
"He's pretty reckless with it. It's a different color every month, so I don't think he's too concerned."

We turn off a main road, past Carson's supermarket/gas station, where gas is "72.9¢ a gallon regular," pull into a thick wall of green with an



Sandra Lee Phillips

"What if the next national fad sport was tree climbing?" wonders Stipe. "They would build these spas in New York where they would have trees shipped in from all around the world."

entrance the van barely squeezes through, and drive down a dirt path. We stop and get out, and Berry reassures me, "You have nothing to worry about." Scenes of *Deliverance* dance in my mind as we walk to a large pond, deserted except for a big, bizarre inflatable polka-dotted dragon. I grab a bucket full of bait and step into a small rowboat with Berry.

The acoustics of the pond are eerie. There's the hiss of crickets in the distance, but here at the center the silence is broken only by the sound of the oars slapping the water.

"What direction do you think the band is going in?"

Berry thinks a long time before speaking.
"It's not like a progression. It goes in spurts. The last record, we were desperate for material. On this one, we were prepared. We're on a good writing streak now. I can see that we're getting a little more [pause] metal. We're becoming more confident. This is the first album we played everything on."

"Does Michael ever explain his lyrics?"
"To us he does... a lot. With no provocation, he'll go on and on about them. To others, he's very guarded. There are brief explanations on the back of *Lifes Rich Pageant*'s sleeve that I think make the songs mean more. Like 'Cuyahoga' is an Indian word for a river in Ohio so polluted they had to burn part of it off. And 'Fall on Me' is about acid rain. Sometimes people will send Michael what they think the lyrics

are in the hopes that he'll tell them what they are. One time, a guy thought one of the lines in 'Sitting Still' is [singing] 'We will gather, throw up beer.' Sometimes Michael will change the lyrics to what people thought they were."

(Little does Berry know that before he quoted the "We knee skinned and river red" line from "Cuyahoga," I had assumed the lyric referred to weenie skin.) We get out of the boat and feed the remaining minnows to three identical tomcats that are watching us. Berry asks if I'm going to see Love Tractor tonight at the 40 Watt Club. "I love Love Tractor," he sighs. "That's the band I almost quit R.E.M. for. When they started out, they used a drum machine because they needed a drummer. This was the same time our original 'Radio Free Europe' single started getting college play. Around that time, we decided it was time either to shit or get off the pot, because we were all still in school and doing miserably. The rest of the guys were all willing to quit school, whereas Love Tractor wanted to stay in school. So I stayed with the R.E.M. boys."

Driving back to town, we talk about how great Pylon was, and Berry shares with me his recipe for boiled peanuts. "Why do you stay in Athens?" I ask.

"You've got a regular turnover of intelligent people. You're in a town large enough to have a couple of good clubs and record stores, but you can still walk from one side of the town to the other. And the myth perpetuates itself, because you've got interesting people coming in search of what they've read about."

Perfect Circle

Flight home. I listen to *Lifes Rich Pageant*. It balances the excitement of their earlier work with the maturity of their later, has a greater scope and better songs than before. Everything from the mix to the lyrics is just a touch more direct; the new material resonates with sensuality. You can not only hear what Stipe is saying, you can understand him, too. Stipe has lowered his defenses enough to quote Patti Smith outright and scream, "I'm so young, I'm so goddamn young." R.E.M. sound like they're finally enjoying themselves.

Above: Mike Mills (left) and Peter Buck act natural in a scene from the film *Athens, GA/Inside-Out*.

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Gil Gilbert

EVERYTHING IS KOOOL

Clean cut. Is fraud a legitimate charge? The publicist for Kool & the Gang tells me that "they're just a bunch of clean-cut guys." Hah! I know. Testimony from the congregation: Funk is never clean cut. Or it wouldn't be funk.

So these are impostors, uh-huh. The publicist says they're talking about being "positive role models" and live quietly in some New Jersey suburb and wear suits. Say it ain't so. Restless funkateer that I am, waiting for the second funk millennium, I can't buy it. The publicist says I can see for myself, but the Gang won't let me come to their homes, and at first only three of them are put forward for inspection. Arms are twisted. More of the Gang are offered. They arrive at a photo studio in Manhattan—in suits. Toned down, scaled up, all the way GQ.

Must be someone else's video. Not Kool & the Gang. Hey, what about "Funky Stuff?"

Hey! HEY!

Chill.

Uh-huh.

The Kool & the Gang incarnation that old hardcore funkateers were stoked on wasn't exactly known for its mellowness, social responsibility, or moral uplift. More like Dr. Feelgood's antidote to all that. A large part of this stuff's initial appeal had to do with SEX. Here was music guaranteed to make the ladies do the nasty dance—the downest, dirtiest, aurally ingested body stimulants to come along yet. Or maybe it just seemed that way in the fantasy projections of certain horny minds. In reality, Kool & the Gang never indulged in the sort of explicit erotica that the Ohio Players took to such a brazen extreme. But "Can't Get Enough of That Funky Stuff," their first big hit, was banned from a number of radio stations, just for having that word in its title.

For nocturnal thrill seekers "mellow" was a suspicious code word for all things bland, sedentary, morosely "sensitive." The mid-'70s was a slack period in pop, dominated by James Taylor, his unctuous heir-ess wife, and a host of hokey-folky "singer/song-writers" with names like law firms, who belonged in Marin County, licking their imaginary wounds.

A lot of white kids—culturally deprived waifs that we were—reacted against that dreadfully blah phase by resorting to heavy metal or punk. Others found a better regenerator of the primal energy. Scattered throughout these here United States (and the industrial north of the UK) were growing contingents of wild-eyed white youth, shameless party animals who adopted "CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF THAT FUNKY STUFF" as their rallying cry.

James Brown was still the king; George Clinton, the lunatic visionary; and Sly, the first crossover genius of the genre. More refined practitioners like the Isleys or

In the beginning,
there was a bunch
of guys from
Jersey City, the
Cheetah, funk,
and narcs
in a basement...

Article by
Tom Ward

AND THE GANG

Earth, Wind and Fire were advancing the form with soaring, sleek productions. But if you craved the stuff raw, raunchy, undiluted, there was a new breed of stripped-down, muscular minimalists on the scene: the Ohio Players, the Fatback Band, the Brothers Johnson, and the only group destined to survive—Kool & the Gang.

A certain opacity surrounds the image of Kool & the Gang. Consider: Here's a band that's been together as long as the Rolling Stones, that's had more Top 40 hits (14) than any group, white or black, in the 1980s and has been a staple on almost every pop radio format. Yet somehow they remain "invisible." "Celebrate!" was a virtual American anthem in 1980, appropriated for the Super Bowl, Chevrolet, and the newly elected Reagan. The comparably huge "Joanna" was tallied by BMI as "the most played pop song" of 1984. But the oceans of ink flowed elsewhere.

Not, it must be said, that the members of Kool & the Gang make a journalist's job any easier. Having known so many years of struggle and setback, they are extremely circumspect in what they say to the press, not about to blow the immensely lucrative enterprise that they've at last become.

In the Manhattan Upper West Side residential district (once a neighborhood) where Lincoln Center now sits, there was a gym frequented by Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk, who got coaching from a boxer named Bobby Bell. Thus it came to pass that Monk agreed to be godfather to the son of Bobby and his wife Aminah, one Robert "Kool" Bell, now bassist and bandleader extraordinaire. (Younger son Ronald "Khalis" told me I'd better mention their Mom, "the main cause of it all.") The Bell brothers were born in Jersey City, New Jersey—an angry little spit of real estate across the river from Manhattan.

In 1963, while they were still in grammar school, they hooked up with three other Jersey City kids—keyboard player Rick West, drummer George Brown, and trumpeter Robert "Spike" Mickens—and called themselves the Five Sounds Junior, in emulation of an older, locally renowned jazz quintet. They were soon joined by guitarist Charles Smith and sax player Dennis "D.T." Thomas. Six out of seven of these 13-to-15-year-olds are still together, 23 years later, as Kool & the Gang. A remarkable longevity and band loyalty by pop's fickle standards. "We're a family, really, we practically grew up together," Kool explains. His brother Ronald, now tenor saxophonist and the chief studio wizard behind the Gang's self-produced rec-

"Tell them that we fly in our private 747s, one for each of us, and have 40 Rolls Royces and..."
(L-R) Kool Bell, Charles Smith, J.T. Taylor, Curtis Williams, George Brown, and Dennis Thomas.



Growing contingents of wild-eyed white youth, shameless party animals, adopted the Gang's "Funky Stuff" as their rallying cry.

ords, proudly insists he's been "the backbone of the group all along." But he's always deferred to Kool's leadership. "I'm not one to be in the foreground. Besides," he laughs, "Ronald & the Gang just wouldn'ta sounded right."

Their adolescent aspirations were suggested in the names they first tried on: Jazziacs, Jazzbirds. Their mentors included McCoy Tyner and Pharoah Sanders, who used to lead jam sessions at St. John's Episcopal Church in Jersey City. Before long, the teen prodigies were sitting in at various Greenwich Village cafés, rapidly earning the regard of older players.

Back across the Hudson, they got a crash course in R&B, and their first experience with commercial music, during a stint as the house band for the Soultown Revue, a lineup of various Stax- and Motown-styled local talent. They also learned what it means to be a lean group. D.T. Thomas remembers, "We painted our first car, this Rambler, black, with 'Soultown Revue' across the side." This jalopy was prone to break down, such as the night "we were playin' a prom out in Jersey somewhere, and ended up havin' to sleep in



Gary Gershoff/Rena Ltd

telephone booths overnight—until our parents could come pick us up." Or the time, Ronald recalls, when "We had to push a shopping cart full of equipment from Bayonne to Jersey City, just to get to a gig."

They were high-school kids having fun, jamming at every opportunity. But those were days when audiences had a lot more patience for random improvisation. At a club in the Village called The Cheetah, for instance, you could, for one dollar, catch the Gang and a couple of other great party bands, and the boogie was nonstop!

The Gang was spotted by producer Gene Redd, who taught them how to shape their amorphous jams into coherent songs. "Mr. Redd not only worked his magic on our sound," George Brown recounts, but played all-around custodian as well. "Yeah, he'd keep runnin' out for 35 White Castle hamburgers at a time, while we rehearsed all day in the back of this saloon." Brown says that early on the band developed the workaholic pace they still maintain. "We learned to cram a lot of activities into a day," and they finished high school despite endless rehearsing and gigging.

In 1969 they were signed to De-Lite Records, then a fledgling label with a tiny roster and no national distribution. Nonetheless, the band scored some re-

Clifford Adams (left) and the rest of the funksters carried the Gang as far as they could with funky instrumentals, but it was J.T. Taylor (above) who gave the group the element it needed to finally make it big—a commanding vocal presence.

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gional hits on R&B radio, "Let the Music Take Your Mind" and "Who's Gonna Take the Weight?" being best-known among them.

"We were rehearsin' for a show in Passaic," says guitarist Charlie Smith, "and we needed a place. This guy offered us his basement. There were a bunch of his friends there, partyin' or whatever. Suddenly, here comes a bunch of guys in suits—narcotics—grabbin' and searchin' people. All this stuff was flyin' through the air, the floor was littered with pills and bags of stuff. We were scared, man, we didn't know what was happenin'. Then they turned to us: 'Put those instruments down, and get against the wall! Everybody's goin' to jail.' Then this lieutenant, he thought he was Kojak, he kept at everybody: 'Somebody's gotta confess. Somebody's gonna have to take the weight for this junk on the floor. C'mon. Who's gonna take the weight?' We all spent the night in jail. When we got to the studio, that phrase stuck with us."

Perils of the chitlin' circuit. Even then, Kool & the Gang were ambitious young men who disdained drugs and pushed themselves hard, cranking out low-budget live albums at the rate of two a year and playing every club, black college, or military base available. But there were to be more run-ins with disreputable characters.

"There was a beer joint in the backwoods in Carolina," says Charles. "Kool had a strained ligament in his hand, so we had to use a substitute bass player. At the end of the night, we're askin', 'Who do we see about getting paid?' The club owner says: 'You guys are not getting paid. I paid for Kool & the Gang.' So me, Dennis, and George decided to go to the office. We went to this little room, there's three guys in there, and all this money sittin' on the desk. One of the guys came over with a sawed-off shotgun, and pointed at the money: 'There's your money. Take it!' Dennis, he started goin' off—screamin' at the bastards. So they shut the door on us. Next thing we hear, outside, glass breakin', a big fight. Some guys made off with a third of our equipment."

It was a life in those days of "sleeping on air mats in the back of the equipment vans. But now," says Brown, "we fly in our private 747s—one for each person. Got that? Write it down. And 40 Rolls-Royces—everyone has a Rolls-Royce—and at least three or four Mercedes. (Pause) But I still drive my little yellow Volkswagen—the 1948 model."

And someday everyone will live in his own cathedral. Perhaps the best of the early Kool & the Gang can be heard on *Hustlers Convention* (Douglas Records, 1973), backing a unique poet/rapper named Lightnin' Rod, a.k.a. Jalalludin Mansur Nuriddin, of the Last Poets.

"Whoa! That is a blast from the past," says Kool.

In what he rightly claims was a years-ahead anticipation of the theme and the metric structure of Grandmaster Flash's "The Message," Jalal created an intricately plotted, semi-autobiographical, album-length panorama of ghetto life, concluding with the message:

*It had cost me 12 years of my time
To realize what a nickel and dime
Hustler I had really been*

*While the real hustlers were ripping off billions
From the unsuspecting millions
Who are programmed to think they can win*

Brecht would have winked. The Gang's contribution was a churning, wah-wah guitar-based groove, and some of their most outré horn lines to date. When I interviewed Jalal a while back, he was justifiably bitter toward most commercial black artists, including the

ostensibly "political" ones, for shying away from any risk of association with the Last Poets' extremism. Yet Jalal spoke warmly, respectfully, of Kool & the Gang, the only group that would do the project.

"I don't even remember the guy that brought this project to us," says Kool. "We never got paid for what we did."

None of the artists ever saw a dime from the project, not an unusual event for the Gang in those days. "We've had people run off with the money," George says, "give us bad contracts. Watch out for the people with big deep pockets! A lot of managers wind up raping the artist, ripping the guy off, where if they'd just held on and been cool—y'know, been legit—it would have happened for them." So the Gang gradually grew "a little more learned in the ways of the business," and left the nickel-and-dime hustlers behind.

The Gang's breakthrough began with the 1974 *Wild and Peaceful* album. It produced three blockbuster singles—"Funky Stuff (Parts I & II)," "Jungle Boogie," and "Hollywood Swinging"—that kept building in popularity over the next few years. These tracks were a faithful translation to vinyl of the scorching, frenzied sound that had set audiences aflame in smoky night-spots like Philadelphia's Sex Machine or PJ's in L.A. The musically attuned did not fail to notice the jazz-

"Those were our wonder years. We wondered what was going to become of us."

informed savvy of these most groove-oriented tunes. Apart from cult favorites such as Tower of Power or P-Funk's Horny Horns, no other group in pop was arranging such densely packed and freaky harmonic clusters to stretch across protracted passages. But without a real singer, the Gang's vocals amounted to so many locker-room chants, random shouts, and ominous grunts from the deep, along with the obligatory fire whistles, and assorted other party-time looniness.

"Everybody else had a singer," says Ronald. "We were just spinnin' horns and playin'."

Right. "Funky Stuff, Part II," for instance, attains some kind of ultimate in minimalism, as Charlie Smith clangs out this one guitar chord for what seems like forever, while rhythmic accents shift around and beneath it as intricately as in salsa, until that chord resolves. Funk heaven.

But a setback lay ahead for the Gang. Its name was disco, which exerted an irresistible, homogenizing pressure on every commercial black artist of the late '70s. In fact, Kool & the Gang probably only survived disco thanks to their fortuitous inclusion on two major movie soundtracks: the singles "Summer Madness" on *Rocky* and "Open Sesame" on *Saturday Night Fever*. The irony was that before disco became Disco—when it was the exclusive preserve of black, Hispanic, and gay clubgoers—the Gang's early hits were in constant demand. But along came these Australian dudes with abrasive falsettos. As soon as Stigwood PRODUCT flooded the mainstream, black pop suffered its own deluge of ornate overproduction, with syrupy strings and cloying girl backup voices layered over thin, irksome, monotonous tunes. Many a fine band swal-



Survivors of the chitlin' circuit: (L-R) Charles Smith, J.T. Taylor, Curtis Williams, Kool, Clifford Adams, and Dennis (D.T.) Thomas.

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Col. Gilbert

lowed up in that desperate pursuit of platinum never recovered.

For their part, the Gang floundered. "Those were what I call our 'wonder years,'" Ronald jokes, "because we wondered what was gonna become of us." There were several aimless albums, a couple of defections from the group (keyboardist Rick West and, for a short time, trumpeter Spike Mickens), and even a bit of jaded-star delinquency: hotel-room trashing. "Yeah, we'd go into each other's bedrooms, puttin' mattresses in the bathtubs, TVs out in the hallways, and so on," Charles reports, hastily adding, "but we paid for all damages." And there was also even some talk of a breakup of the band. "There was a lot of insecurity," says Charlie, "each guy thinking 'maybe it's my fault'—but no real danger of the band breakin' up."

Instead, they took inventory. And made the right moves. They recruited Brazilian jazz-funk producer Eumir Deodato and found the million-dollar voice of J.T. Taylor.

Taylor was the first guy they auditioned to become the first lead singer in Gang history. Another Jersey native, Taylor, now 32, was teaching in a private school by day and singing with a local outfit called Streetdancer by night. In the summer of '78, Stephen Galfus, an owner of a studio in West Orange, NJ, introduced J.T. to the Gang. Taylor added the missing ingredient, the commanding vocal presence that had previously given the Commodores and Earth, Wind and Fire—the Gang's nearest counterparts—the crossover advantage. Comparisons of Taylor with Lionel Richie are frequent, though J.T. will insist: "I don't blow on the fact of comparing." He's gifted with

"We've had people run off with the money, give us bad contracts. Watch out for the people with big deep pockets."

a rich, sturdy, full-throated voice that has just enough edge, grit, and bite to propel the uptempo dance numbers and a dulcet control that can soothe any ballad. It's the voice every front man should have. Fortunately Taylor spares us Richie's overweening ego and melodramatic video posturing and never hoards the foreground. He's just there, with a winning smile, submerging himself within the band's collective persona of good-natured male bonding.

Deodato, according to *Village Voice* critic Carol Cooper, "made the energy and humor the Gang reserved for funk, and the studied lyricism they reserved for jazz, work together.... Arrangements were lush, symphonically textured soundscapes with plenty of space left between sotto voce polyrhythms for horn, guitar, and keyboard obbligatos. They'd developed a winning formula...."

The collaboration got better as they went along. If 1979's *Ladies' Night* was still marred by occasional schlock and obvious filler, it also offered "Too Hot," a bittersweet ballad as exquisite and enduring as any latter-day soul has produced. With each subsequent album, the songwriting grew stronger, while the sound was sculpted with an ever surer touch: *Celebrate!* (1980), *Something Special* (1981), *As One* (1982). Kool

the Gang had remolded themselves into a consummate cross-generational attraction, with neo-Nat "King" Cole ballads for the older folks—and young lovers—and plenty of dance-floor fire for the party crowd. The string of hits was recordbreaking. And unbroken.

A few cried "sell-out!", particularly in Britain, where the band's raunchier incarnation had built up a sizeable biracial following. "Our fans there were into a diehard R&B sound," Kool explains. "A lot of the critics were saying, 'You lost the rough edge, it's more homogenized.'" Such objections carried less weight in the States, where Kool & the Gang were finally being exposed to millions who'd never heard them before.

By 1983 the band felt secure enough for an amicable parting from Deodato and returned to self-production, this time on a more knowledgeable basis. The result was *In the Heart*, with their most enchanting ballad yet, "Joanna"—and, in the metal-edged guitar attack of "Tonight," a taste of what was to come. *Emergency*.

Emergency started climbing the *Billboard* charts in December 1984 and just wouldn't quit. Besides its firm hold on the pop chart, it was in the Top 10 of the black chart for well over a year—astounding, considering the normal turnover in that fiercely competitive market—and as of April '86, it could boast a longevity only approximated by a handful of hot new vixen-phenoms: Whitney Houston, Sade, Klymaxx, and Run D.M.C.

Beyond its commercial success, *Emergency* marked the culmination of all Kool & the Gang's previous development. With a much more assured and consistent mastery than on *In the Heart*, the Gang built on the lessons of their Deodato days, yet advanced into new territory that rekindled some of their old fire. Both "Misled" and "Emergency" were powered by scorching fuzz guitar that merged rock and funk every bit as potently as the more-touted efforts of Prince or Run D.M.C. The jazz dimension returned as well, in the shifting time signature and swirling sax pyrotechnics of "You Are the One."

In all, then, it was a supremely satisfying and "realized" album on its own terms. So, anticipating the neglect that *Emergency* would suffer in this year's *Voice Critics' Poll*, Brian Chin offered: "Shame on the jerks who rhapsodized over Redds and the Boys and continue to ignore... Kool & the Gang, for God's sake. Their underlying contempt for commercial talent—the equally genuine, moneymaking craft of black musicians—stinks to high heaven."

Devo once liked to coyly present themselves as making "corporate music for corporate man." That's what Kool & the Gang really are all about—without the ironic smirk. Being a smoothly run business is a point of great pride with them, as much as the music itself. No "role conflict" here: entertainer/artist/businessman/musician, each self-perception melding into the others, forming a seamless, untroubled whole.

"At this time," George Brown informs me, "we meet on a weekly basis, sometimes twice a week, and we spend the whole day. Right now, we're scheduling the 1987 tour, which markets to target, and so on." George stressed that there really is no significant separation between the band's six core members (Kool, J.T., Ronald, George, Charles, and Dennis), the sidemen (since 1980, keyboardist Curtis "Fitz" Williams, trombonist Clifford Adams, and trumpeters Spike Mickens and Michael Ray), and the auxiliary entourage. All are viewed as part of the same entity: Kool & the Gang, Inc.

Kool, J.T., and George (a prolific author of their hits), are completely devoted to the group program. Charlie's long had a vision to do a solo jazz album in homage to Wes Montgomery, while Dennis plans to produce spinoff projects with his actress wife, rapper son, and vocalist daughter. But neither places much priority on these side ventures.

Only Ronald seems a touch distant from the band,

"Shame on the jerks who rhapsodized over Redds and the Boys," wrote one critic, "and continue to ignore Kool & the Gang."

opting to stay out of the touring Gang for the past year or so to tinker with studio outboard equipment. "I've developed a whole digital MIDI system," he says, "not from scratch, but combining existing systems." He's also the one who most misses the old days of jazz blowing. "We may be a little afraid to stretch out," he says of the close adherence to proven formula. "But I'm not," he declares. "I'm ready in a minute." But even his morale is mostly upbeat. Asked whether the guys hang out together informally, apart from obligations, or if they're like a championship basketball team of players who play great together but can't stand to be with each other, he says, "We're not like a great basketball team, we are a great basketball team. You should come see us. The group Skyy, before the game they were sayin', 'The Skyy's gonna fall on Kool & the Gang.' But we whipped 'em, man, whipped 'em."

Hardly the image of artists as alienated eccentrics, even less of Rock As Rebellion, Kool & the Gang is just modern black capitalism at work, folks. Yet only someone with a perverse nostalgia for the days when the original geniuses of soul and blues were made vulnerable by their own gullibility in money matters could fail to see that the bottom-line awareness of black musicians today—chillingly calculating as it gets at times—represents a certain measure of progress. At least they've become their own capitalists—not somebody else's patsies.

As corporations go, The Gang, Inc., is certainly a benign one. The successful ones live with their contradictions. At a certain point, their relentlessly positive attitude starts to grate. In fact, the linchpin of their ideology, the belief that infinite upward mobility is available to all by a simple act of will might make them welcome guests at the White House. Asked about their allowing Reagan to use "Celebrate," J.T. politely

replied: "Our first feeling was that we were honored. At the time, I was honestly hoping he could help people." Honest? Reagan's less-than-friendly plans for blacks were the worst-kept secret in his 1980 campaign. How could anyone not have known this? Or was this just the diplomat talking?

Yet J.T. is the most representative spokesman for the Gang in its present incarnation: poised, graciously articulate, but no-nonsense. Ronald sums him up as a "man of quiet intensity." And he can be quite forceful when it matters—on rap music as a negative influence, for example.

"When I hear rap records, it doesn't show me any heavy integrity, musically speaking. I mean, I don't begrudge the cats makin' the money—but what are they gonna do when the fad's over? And this idea that you can be successful as a musician without really learning your craft, I think it sends kids a bad signal."

Soft on Reagan but hard on Run-D.M.C.? That's how this former schoolteacher is: moralistic, even conservative, and not ashamed of it. He says he's opposed to PMRC-style censorship, "But that wouldn't apply to us"—and the erotic excesses of many pop acts today personally affront his strong belief in "respect for women" and "families staying together."

There was, however, one occasion when J.T. allowed himself to become distinctly undiplomatic. It seems that years before most Americans even heard of Sun City, Kool & the Gang were approached by a representative of the South African music industry, ostensibly bearing an award honoring the band's great popularity there. "It turned out to be a catch, to get us to perform in Sun City," J.T. revealed. "The man was offering us a lot of money, too. But we just told him, 'Go away! That'd be like smackin' your mother!'"

That's real. So the suits aren't empty. The funk is still at home. And Kool & the Gang is still taking the weight. Funk heaven.

ATLANTA CHILD MURDERS from p. 76

high-ranking member of the Klan, was dealing in heavy weaponry with the Sanderses.

Five months after Georgia governor George Busbee ordered the GBI to investigate and infiltrate Klan activities in the state, to find if there was the potential for violence, the court documents reveal GBI agents listened to wiretap conversations as informants discussed with Charles Sanders the buying and selling of M16s and fragmentation grenades. They also heard from an informant that one of the Sanderses planned to break into a National Guard armory to steal heavier weaponry.

Yet in July 1981, with much fanfare, Governor Busbee and the GBI announced that their massive investigation into Klan activity in Georgia had turned up relatively little to worry about. Later that month, Jackson destroyed the explosives the Sanderses had sold BJ.

Today, Joe Jackson feels that the investigation is a closed matter. Reached by telephone, both Jackson and his supervisor at the time of the investigation, Robert Ingram, referred all questions to Robbie Hambrick, the director of the GBI. We called Hambrick a number of times, but he neither came to the phone nor returned our calls.

As we studied the various FBI, GBI, and court files of the case we made two startling discoveries. Initially, we had assumed that the GBI was receiving detailed reports of the task force investigation in the event that it could use leads turned up there that connected to its own investigation, and that even after closing down its investigation of the Sanderses, the GBI would at least notify the task force of some of its findings. But while examining the FBI and GBI files

we found out that they had not. Among the files we discovered the extraordinary case of Patsy Jackson.

It was 7:15 on the bright, sunny winter morning of February 13, 1981, when Margaret "Patsy" Jackson eased her car as usual into the parking lot behind Building Number 9 on Corporate Square Boulevard in Atlanta where she worked as a dental technician. As she drove across the quiet lot, Jackson's eyes suddenly spotted a green Chevrolet Impala parked parallel to the curb at the far end. Inside, a strange-looking man sat perfectly erect, staring back at her. They held eye contact for several seconds. He was white, in his late 20s, with brown shoulder-length hair, a wispy mustache, and eyes set too close together for his head. He was wearing a heavy flannel plaid shirt, and his unexplained presence in that remote section of the near-empty lot disturbed Jackson enough that she continued to watch him as she walked up the ramp to her office. Once inside her office, Jackson looked out the window to where the car had been parked, but it was gone.

At two o'clock that afternoon, the spot where the green Impala had sat in the dawn was alive with activity. Police and emergency squads were everywhere—being careful not to disturb the body of 11-year-old Patrick Baltazar where it lay, face-down, half-way down an embankment strewn with trash and debris. He had been missing for a week. The strangled body carried animal hairs and fibers like those found on many of the other murdered children.

On hearing the news of this discovery, Patsy Jackson called the police to offer what she had seen that morning. Her incredibly detailed description of the man led to a police artist's sketch which, along with the car, provided one of the best leads yet in the continuing murders of the children. But nothing came of it.

While the lead didn't pan out, however, one glaring aspect of it went totally unnoticed. The composite

sketch that Patsy Jackson provided to the police looked like at least one of the suspects in the GBI investigation, who, according to court papers, also happened to drive a light green 1968 Chevrolet. But because there was no cross referencing of information or leads between these two investigations, the connection was never made.

Then we made a second discovery. Among the many documents of the secret and task force investigations, we found information that startled defense lawyers and Detective Melton. The informant BJ had reported that Klan members he had visited had a stockpile of uniforms, including police and Puroator uniforms. Meanwhile, the task force investigation produced dozens of witnesses who reported that men dressed as cops, security guards, or wearing uniforms, were frequently spotted with children the last time they were seen alive.

But this connection between these reports was never made because the two investigations didn't share information. They remained isolated pieces begging for discovery.

It is unclear whether there was any single person responsible for all the child murders. There are strong indications that there were several murderers who did not necessarily act in concert—copycat murderers, random killers, even a friend of Wayne Williams.

The fact that Williams was only convicted of murdering two adults and none of the many children who disappeared has left a cloud of suspicion over the investigation.

"You shouldn't cry over spilled milk," said Mayor Andrew Young of the lingering questions that fester in pockets of his city. But for others, the questions are too big, the losses too great, not to be answered. Who killed Atlanta's children?

Tina

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want to wash?

Chuck Berry has been jailed three times. He did a stretch in reform school on a robbery conviction. In 1959, at the height of his career, he was convicted under the Mann Act, a federal law that forbids transporting a minor across state lines for immoral purposes. What Chuck did was bring a 14-year-old, Spanish-speaking Apache girl up from El Paso to check coats in his St. Louis nightclub. She was, or became, a prostitute. This was, of course, a bonehead move on Chuck's part, which he made worse with a second bonehead move—firing her. She told her story to the cops, and Chuck went away for two years.

Later, Berry built a career as a popular revivalist. In June 1979 he was invited by President Carter to play the White House. This was shortly after he had been indicted by the IRS for income-tax evasion and shortly before he began a 100-day sentence for his conviction on that charge. Just another example of what a peanut Carter was.

The Mann Act entered rock history again in 1966, when a Houston record producer named Huey Meaux was convicted under its provisions. Meaux had been developing a Texas rock sound, one contributor to which was Doug Sahm, of the Sir Douglas Quintet. Sahm got busted for marijuana in Corpus Christi and skipped the state. Then Meaux was busted, and a number of young Texans, including Janis Joplin and Steve Miller, followed Sahm to San Francisco.

Meaux wasn't the only behind-the-scenes figure to be convicted on sex charges. On May 6, 1982, Tam Paton, ex-manager of the Bay City Rollers, received three years for "conducting himself in a shamelessly indecent manner towards ten teenage boys."

Jim Morrison was arrested five times. In December 1967 he was arrested in New Haven, Connecticut. Morrison and a woman, not his wife, were necking before a show in a backstage shower stall. A cop came in and ordered him to desist. "Eat this," said Jim, grabbing his crotch. The cop waved a can of Mace and said, "Last chance." "Last chance to eat it," Jim replied. The cop sprayed him. Jim wasn't arrested until he described the incident onstage that evening, changing the story only to make himself sound innocent and polite. The cops in the auditorium took exception to his portrayal of one of their brethren and arrested him for breaching the peace.

Early in 1968, Jim was arrested in Las Vegas. After spending ten hours drinking, Morrison and writer Bob Gover found themselves outside a strip club called Pussycat A Go Go, which was featuring a revue called Stark Naked Thieves. Morrison apparently pretended to be smoking a joint and offered the guard outside the theater a toke. One can only imagine what the guard thought was happening; he clearly didn't like it. He clubbed Morrison and Gover. The police came and arrested them. In the patrol car, Morrison began taunting the cops by calling them "chickenshit" and "pigs." Gover tried to hush Morrison, who replied, "No, it's a test of courage."

In Miami on March 1, 1969, Morrison took the stage after having drunk away the day. He was incoherent. He began songs and abandoned them. Finally he began a long speech. "I'm not talkin' about revolution," he said in part. "I'm talkin' about havin' some fun. I'm talkin' about love. Love love love love love love love." Eventually he began to remove his clothes. A sound man interrupted him before he could complete the task. His biographers note that Jim, who never wore underwear, was that night wearing boxer shorts. On that basis, they claim that Jim was going to stop short of exposure. "He had planned this carefully," they wrote. Sure. He'd gone to Stark



AP Wire Photo

Ringo appears to be the only ex-Beatle without a criminal conviction.

Naked Thieves to do research.

The police charged Morrison with one felony count and three misdemeanors, observing that "he did lewdly and lasciviously expose his penis, place his hands upon his penis, and shake it." In 1970, Jim was convicted of these charges, sentenced to six months hard labor, and fined \$500.

The fourth arrest took place in November 1969 on a Continental airliner bound from LA to Phoenix. Morrison and a companion were drunk. They harassed the stewardesses, started a food fight, and were generally a nuisance. They were arrested and convicted under provisions of the federal antiskysjacking law. But the stewardess recanted her testimony, and the conviction was reversed and the charges dropped.

Morrison's final arrest took place in LA in August 1970, the day before his Miami trial was to begin. An old woman woke up and found Morrison sleeping on her porch. She thought he was another Manson, and the cops busted him for vagrancy.

Do you think anyone around Morrison ever used the words "professional help"?

Rick Stevens, the lead vocalist of Tower of Power, is currently in prison on three counts of first-degree murder. Jim Gordon, a fabulous drummer who played with everybody from Eric Clapton to Joan Baez, murdered his mother by hitting her in the head three times with a hammer and then stabbing her four times in the chest. Sex Pistol Sid Vicious allegedly murdered his girlfriend Nancy Spungen on Columbus Day 1978 by stabbing her. He died of a heroin overdose before the case came to trial.

Charles Manson reportedly made some demo tapes for producer Terry Melcher before he went on his rampage. It is said they were pretty good. Who knows, a few different twists of fate, a little better timing, a few fewer tabs of acid—and maybe tomorrow's gossip columns could have read, "At Palladium last night, rock star Charlie Manson and longtime girlfriend Squeaky Fromme celebrated the release of Chuck's new album, *Raisin'* a Ruckus, featuring a remake of the old Beatles' tune 'Helter Skelter.' 'Can't stay late,' Chuck said. 'Gotta get up to be interviewed by Ron Reagan, Jr., on GMA.'"

Top: Paul McCartney wondering how that half-pound of marijuana got in his suitcase. Right: Chuck Berry after his 1979 sentencing for tax evasion: I like to smoke after I've been screwed.

Now, a few words about rock stars who have upheld the law.

Richard Nixon made Elvis Presley an honorary federal drug-enforcement agent. Elvis got a badge and everything.

Then there was an English group called the Police. One of their most famous songs is about surveillance. It features the lyric, "Every move you make/Every breath you take/I'll be watching you." They performed this song at the Amnesty International Benefit Concert.

Without a trace of irony.

TEN MEMORABLE JAIL SONGS

1. "Riot in Cell Block #9," by Wanda Jackson. Wanda is a sinfully neglected singer. She was really tough, and in 1960 she recorded this Lieber and Stoller goodie. In the hands of the Coasters, this may have been just another L&S novelty song, but Wanda really foments a riot.
2. "Folsom Prison," by Johnny Cash. "I shot a man in Reno, just to see him die/Now when I hear that whistle blowin', I hang my head and cry."
3. "I Fought the Law," by the Clash. Noses out the original by Bobby Fuller Four, if only for sheer furiousness.
4. "Chain Gang," by Sam Cooke. The "ooh aah" of the rock breakers is a little preposterous, but you can't take away from that voice.
5. "Back on the Chain Gang," by the Pretenders. I don't know for sure that this is really about jail, but I like it.
6. "Jailhouse Rock," by Elvis Presley. This one really is a Lieber and Stoller novelty song, but the way Elvis delivered it, it wouldn't have mattered if it was "Monastery Rock."
7. "Have Mercy Judge," by Chuck Berry. When dealer Johnny gets sent away, he asks the judge to tell his girlfriend Tulane, who is "too alive to live alone," to "live, and I'll forgive her, and even love her more when I come back home."
8. "You Never Even Call Me by My Name," by Steve Goodman and John Prine. Aims to include every staple of country music, including mother, prison, dead dogs, getting drunk, farms, trucks, and trains. The pivotal verse of this song begins, "Ever since the dog got dunk and died, and Mama went to prison, nothing around this old farm has been the same."
9. "Green Green Grass of Home," by Tom Jones. The man who never met a song he couldn't oversing does a job here.
10. "Let's Lock the Door and Throw Away the Key," by Jay and the Americans. Just kidding.



New Liberty Series

"Oh, that's a good excuse."

Bitch. I could have said, "What about the affair you had behind your husband's back?" because that was all over the papers, but when it comes to morality . . .

But it could have damaged your throat.

I could be dead. There were things I learned after about heroin that are amazing. I never knew every time you snorted it, you could drop dead.

Were you drugged out when you wrote the songs for *From Luxury to Heartache*?

No. I wasn't, actually. When I was working, I stopped and kind of went through some withdrawal shit.

So did drugs have any influence on the songs you wrote?

Not at all. There's one song that mentions Ecstasy, but it's actually antidrugs. It's saying there's got to be more to life. It was a period where I actually was coming off, and I was saying, "What are you going to do, Boy? Your lies have got to stop."

I said that all along from the beginning. I am intelligent. I am not a stupid asshole. I did keep saying to myself, "Come on, make a decision. Are you going to stop, or are you going to carry on? If so, go and register yourself as a junkie." But I just didn't feel it happening. I got off for the whole period of the album. It was for about a month or two months.

Didn't you get really sick that time as well?

Actually, no. The more you take heroin and the bigger your dependence becomes, every time you come off the sicker you get. At that point I was pretty sort of new to the stuff. Now, if I started taking it again, I'd be really ill. In fact, Meg Patterson said to me when I left her treatment, "You take even a snort of what you took before, you might drop dead. Your body's clean now, and the shock . . ." I'm pretty washed out now, pretty detoxicated, so if I even did snort half as much as I used to take, I could just drop dead of heart failure. She told me that over McDonald's. In fact, it was the first time I'd been out during the whole treatment really properly. I hadn't been able to go anywhere, and Alice [Roy's wife] took me out in the car with the roof down, and I thought, "I'm free again." We went to McDonald's for some burgers and stuff for everyone, and people were going, "It can't be him, he's dying. It can't be him, he looks too healthy." I felt pleased with myself. I started to get my glow back, redness in the cheeks. Meg really educated me because I never knew half the things she told me. I'm glad I know if I ever do heroin again, I'm risking death, and I don't want to die. Please.

When I was on heroin, I would just say, "I don't care. So what if there's a risk?" God, I'm a real nancy now. I'm terrified of anything hurting me, I really am. I hate it.

So drugs had no influence on the recording process?

As person to person, they all began to really hate me because I was impossible to get along with, but I never did any recording while high.

How were you with the band?

I was very rude to them. Roy was terrified of me. I was so rude to him. I made him feel like shit. Of course, I refused to accept this. I'd say, "What's wrong with Roy?" and Tony would say, "God, you're making his life a misery. He can't bear it. He's very sensitive." I'd snap, "Oh, I don't care. Rubbish, I'm being totally nice to him." That's what I was like.

So you've patched up things with everybody in the band?

Yeah. I think five minutes of being nice on the



Unlabeled: Facebook

"One thing about Marilyn is that he's cunning, witty, charming, seductive—everything, but he's not intelligent."

telephone was enough. I thought, "Phew . . ."

Fleet Street will be disappointed.

I still think we have a lot to offer. I don't care what anyone says. I'm proud of the album. It's great. A lot of things were changed, which I wasn't happy about. "I Pray" was originally like "Mediterranean Homesick Blues." The original words were so good. It went:

*Jerk-faced pop star
Driving in your big car
Good looks
Strong hooks
Only get you so far*

It was so good, and they changed it just for the sake of changing it. Not them, but them with Arif Mardin. It was, like, Arif, he's brilliant, but sometimes he does things just for the sake of doing it. I don't understand why, but he did and aggravated me immensely.

He wanted to throw "Move Away" out the window. And I insisted we record it as a B-side. Halfway through the project, Arif had to leave and handed over the production to Lou Hahn. I said to Lou—who was easier to manipulate—I said, "Lou, let's record it as a B-side." The vocal on the song is on the original demo we did in Holland. It's the first vocal I'd ever done. It took about four days to synch it to the track because the tempo was different. I sang it with such conviction the first time and never, ever . . . It's an arrogant version of "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me?" It's accepting what happens rather than hiding in a corner and being all self-pitiful. It's a modern love song.

Were you under a bit of pressure from Virgin to come up with a hit album?

No. I wanted to change producers, but I'm not going to sit here and say everyone else was wrong, and I was right. I knew it was time for a change: I'm all for change with everything, whether it be fashion, sex, music, politics, anything—I want constant mayhem. I want to be reckless all the time. So I really didn't want to work with Steve Levine on the third album. I wanted someone new. I wanted to work with someone black. We just did it. There are some great songs on the whole, but they just got butchered. You'll never know how good they were. I'm sure if someone like Quincy Jones got his hands on them . . . I listen to this album and think, "My songs, my songs, ruined."

My brother Kevin's gotten involved with this band called Hey Mama. He's, like, working with them. They have this great, big, fat, sort of Helen Terry singer. She's a girl who went to my school. Wonderful voice. I helped write a song with them the other day. I went down there to work with them, and she was talking about the problems she has with the band, and I explained to her, same with me. When I'm with Culture Club, and they start jamming, I'm lost because I'm not a musician, I can't join in. I'm not one of the boys. I feel like I get so bored. They never have a chance to play just as a band because I bitch and say, "Let's write a song, because I can't play an instrument." So I was explaining to her the sort of problems she would have. She said, "It was really good working with you," and I said, "Yeah, because our voices are our instruments." Unfortunately, with Culture Club, if they make a decision and change something musically, I cannot do anything about it. Because I can't say, "What about this?" and play it on the piano. I'm a musical cripple because I've got no power over them. With the third album, I had so much to say, but I couldn't say it. Sometimes people are not on the same wavelength as you, and you can't get the message across. That's the trouble I've always had with the band, and I'm always going to have it.

I did Marilyn's thing "Spirit in the Sky" with Michael Rudetsky, which I love, and I think is great. It got to No. 1 here, an awful version of the song. Even Marilyn, with his sort of limp, yes-I'm-a-faggot sort of voice, would have got that to No. 1. It was a

great record.

At the risk of getting struck off CBS, Frank Rand is an asshole. And you can quote me on that. I'm furious with him for not releasing it. If they had put it out as a 45, it would have gone to No. 1. It would have been so good for Marilyn and so good for me. It would have released so much tension. Now he has some bee in his bonnet that I deliberately tried not to get it released. I begged them to release that. I said I would do anything to get it released. I even said we will accept no advance, but when they said, "We want Marilyn to pay seventy-five percent of all promotion," I said, "Give it up, man." I said, "He's a new artist, America's a big country, the guy's not going to make a carrot."

We're in a terrible situation because we recorded "Spirit in the Sky" free at the Hit Factory, and we ran up a \$17,000 bill at the Hit Factory. They let us do that, and CBS paid the bill. We were powerless. What a wicked thing to do. They bought our track, shelved it, and said "Up yours."

What is the worst problem you're going to have?

The worst problem I am going to have is going to be coming back to England. They're going to strip search me, put rubber gloves on, and do me over. The English customs officers hate me, and they know now they've got me and can do anything they like, and they're going to treat me like shit. I'm dreading it. People say the judge let me off lightly, but I could have wasted a lot of time. I could have pleaded not guilty and wasted months of taxpayers' money and people's valuable time. I said, "What the fuck, I did it, and everyone in the world knows I did it. I'm terribly disgraced in front of the whole world." I said, "Yes, I'm guilty," and I owned up to it. In a way, I think that's why he let me off so leniently. He realized I could have wasted time, I could have played for time and done everything not to have that conviction, because it's going to cause me lots of problems, and that's what he said. He said, "You were treated like a normal person, and I'm going to treat you like a normal person now—you're fined 250 pounds."

Judy Carne might be saying, "Why didn't he go to jail?" but I wasn't caught smuggling. There was a thing in the paper from Judy Carne saying I should have gone to jail. No way. I wasn't caught in possession. There were no drugs found in my house.

Did you get charged because of Fleet Street?

I definitely got charged because of Fleet Street. There was a letter on the cover of *Today* magazine saying how dare I blame Fleet Street. I do blame them. Absolutely. One hundred percent. It's their fucking fault.

Did they make up the story of your asking photographer David Levine to buy you cocaine?

Absolutely. The first story on cocaine from David Levine was an absolute lie. It was a set-up. He has a coke addiction. He did it because he needed money. He has a lovely car. I'm going to pour acid all over that car. I don't care if I get arrested doing it.

What happened when they took you in for questioning?

When they took me to the police station for questioning, they took away my laces, my belt, my braces, and threw me in a cell. It was heavy. Then they gave me breakfast. It was so contradictory. They do it to confuse you. They want to fuck you up completely, so when they question you, you just don't know where you are. Plus, I was halfway through my treatment. Even though I agreed to go in and be questioned, I wasn't prepared for what they were going to ask me.

How long did they question you for?

Eight hours.

What did they ask you?

They asked me things like, "Does Marilyn free-base?" I said, "I don't care if Marilyn swallows chandeliers and sits on pumpkins." I said, "I'm just not interested. Don't ask me questions about Marilyn. Stop." I got halfway through my questions, and I just burst into tears. I said, "This is bullshit, you lied to me. Why are you asking me questions about my brother? You can't honestly expect me to sit here and convict my brother. You must be fucking crazy." I was swearing at them and screaming at them.

They put me back in the cell. One policeman in the station . . . I just said, "You fucking asshole pig." He said, "Don't yell at me, I work here. I only work here." I said, "You're all the fucking same." "No," he said, "I'm in a uniform, I'm a different kind of pig." At the end of the day I said I was sorry to him, and I actually was sorry. "I'm bloody sorry for swearing at you." He said it didn't matter, but I said I wasn't that type of person, and I was really sorry.

You seem to be going out to clubs a lot and partying now. Is that healthy, considering you are overcoming drug addiction?

I have to live. Someone said to me it's like slapping everyone who supported me in the face, but I must live a normal life.

Is it tempting to you at all?

No, it's not tempting to me at all. That's why I must go out. To prove to myself I can go out, live a

normal life, and not do drugs. Go out, dance, and get pissed. I never used to drink. I got drunk last Sunday, really drunk, and I was staggering about. All right, I'm not going to become an alcoholic—Judy Garland stroke two—but I just must go out. I must show I can do it without falling on my face. I must do that. That's why I've been going out.

You haven't been out drinking a lot?

No, no—don't you start. "He's now turned to drink."

Off heroin, on to alcohol—the saga continues.

I must live a normal life. I'm recording this week and writing. I'm happy about it. Someone said if I go out, it's a slap in the face to the people who supported me. "Oh, you don't care. You're back out at nightclubs, and you are tempting yourself." But I must prove to myself I am strong enough not to fall back into old habits.

Boredom is a killer. Boredom can turn anyone to drugs. I never went out to clubs when I was taking drugs. I stayed in most of the time, getting out of my brains and being sort of a philosopher—Kentucky Fried philosophy—life through heroin.

What is your relationship with Alice Temple?

I love her a lot. I do love her and think the world of her, but we're not lovers. (Whispering so his boyfriend Michael can't hear) Alice and I have made love.



Lee Hays

"I am partly gay. I am bisexual, and I am proud of it. Anything I can do to help the cause I will."

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Is she the only girl you've been with?

No, there are a couple more. There are quite a few, but no major conquests. The thing with me is that I can't sleep with women. To me, it seems like ignorance. It's like closing the door on myself, and I musn't do that. I'd feel sad if I couldn't get off with a girl. They're not a major part of my life.

So the two of you just fooled around?

We kiss and hug, we hold hands. We do things. We've had a shower together. I love her.

Was she around during the whole ordeal?

I spoke to her a lot on the phone. When we started getting close, the press pounced, and there's a guy called Jonathan Ashby who was pretending to be a friend of mine, and I introduced him to Alice, and he used her so much. . . . He took advantage of her naiveté. He took advantage of the fact she knew nothing about their methods. They used her.

Poor Alice. I turned on her, which I shouldn't have done. Again, being out of my head, all the time. She was supportive, and she's a doll. I think the world of her.

Are you friends again?

Totally. In fact, we had the shower last week.

Is there something you've learned from this experience that you want to share with people?

Whatever happens to you in your life, if you become a heroin addict, an alcoholic, whatever, don't worry. I've had a few letters which have said you deserve this. It's your own fault. Don't let that bother you. Face up to it. Whatever it is, face up to it; you're always going to have people out there who are going to kick you when you are down, but don't let that stop you from fighting it. Fuck the police,

fuck Fleet Street, fuck anyone who says I was wrong to do it. I know. I don't need to be told. Even if I didn't know, I've faced up to it. That's what I'd say to anybody. Don't hide away. You'll always find someone to help you. In my book there's a line that goes: "As far back as school, I learned the world is full of assholes, but I've only realized recently they're all seated side by side in the lavatory of no intellect." Don't give up on people.

Was that AIDS thing Fleet Street induced?

I'm suing them. *The Daily Star* said they had proof I'd been for a checkup for AIDS. I'm afraid that's completely untrue. First of all, if I had it I wouldn't want to know. I'd rather die not knowing. Anyone who's got it has my total sympathy. My heart goes to them. No one deserves to die of AIDS, and I'll do any record, any concert for AIDS research.

I am partly gay. I am bisexual, and I am proud of it. Anything I can do to help the cause I will.

None of my fans have written me and said, "Hey, I'm going to start taking heroin because you did." They've all been totally the opposite. They've all said, "Please don't take it again, and we love you, and we're with you." That's a lot healthier than kicking people in the teeth. Heroin is so bad because the only thing you really own is your body, and you're killing your body.

If you were walking down a beach and you stumbled on a lamp and a genie popped out and said, "OK, George, you've been through a lot of shit—you get three wishes," what would they be? One—anybody crippled or disabled could be cured. Two—that my parents would live forever. Three—to rid the world of jealousy.

I don't want people to be equal, I think being unequal to other people is what makes you want to

live and fight to live. I just think jealousy is a terrible thing, and I'd like to rid the world of it. They're silly wishes because they'll never come true.

I've been through hell, and I've come out the other end. I live with a lot of fear, that's why I can't understand why I would inflict pain on myself. There you go, I have done it. I regret it, but I'm not apologizing anymore. This is my last apology. I'm really fed up with it.

The American media have been real bastards, saying I have AIDS and crap, but a lot of people have been on my side, and I want to say thank you.

A girl turned up with \$16,000 in a brown bag because she was told by the court that that's the most I could be fined. She mortgaged her car. She gave me that money, and I was so embarrassed.

My mother called Jon Moss and told him I am a heroin addict. He said, "I've got my own life to live." Again, I don't blame him, I don't blame anyone. I did it.

Everything is an education. Heroin or not, I've been educated. I appreciate things more.

I don't want to take pills for the rest of my life. I'm going to take them for a few more weeks. I'm sure Fleet Street is watching for me to fall on my face, but I won't give them the pleasure.

Bonnie's wonderful, Michael's wonderful, and my friend Mike Rudetsky's just come over from America. You can only cry wolf so many times, Kevin, and then people stop listening. I'm going to do my damndest.

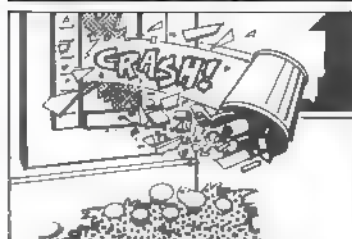
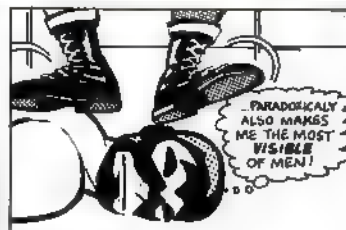
That stuff about my brother going to look for Marilyn isn't true. My family are not the assholes they were made out to be. I've never had anything sexual with Marilyn, you know that, I just love the guy.

At some stage, I hope I'm in a room with people taking it, and I won't do it. I hope I get to that day soon.

"KILLER" KANT



IN "THE CRITIQUE OF PURE WRESTLING"



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Material chronology patterned after skin.



BLURVISION

Imagine Monty Python's *Flying Circus*, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and *The Kenny Everett Video Show* crashing into a wall at 200 miles an hour, the exact moment of impact held like a note for 30 minutes of brain-in-the-Cuisinart futuristic comedy. That's what *Shadoevision*, due to debut this month on Cinemax, feels like.

Shadoevision is unique. Like an uneven ball made out of rubber bands, it's a show composed of silly themes, yet instead of the anticipated slapstick payoff, the punch lines are almost existential—and sometimes not almost. The concepts of the show are beyond first-viewing comprehension, yet *Shadoevision*'s charm is that it has the simplicity and innocence of the Saturday morning sci-fi serials. The plot is cut from the same camp cloth as Flash Gordon, Batman, and Captain America—but as if adapted by Samuel Beckett on a hangover. The action is played in perfection by a cast who absolutely convince you that instead of being grown-ups pretending to be kids (the apparent nucleus of most American comedy), they are a bunch of kids pretending to be grown-ups. The music is great, and everything hurtles at breakneck speed and physics-defying visual twists. If *Shadoevision* was hardcore, it would be approximately the same measure beyond thrash as thrash is currently beyond Lawrence Welk.

The story so far: Television is inexplicably jammed from outer space, usurped by one extraterrestrial broadcast—the 24-hour, “3-D, two-way” Johnny Dakota talk show. No one knows who Johnny Dakota is or where he came from (fair enough, it's a big universe), but most disconcerting is where *did* the regular TV go, and will it come back? Dakota is handsome, like Redford playing Letterman, and charismatic with a touch of the restrained megalomania that comes with benign world domination. He informs us that the show is broadcasting on everyone's personal wavelength and provides an “evolutionary IQ test” so that everyone can readjust to accept clearer transmission. Johnny tells us that we are evolving ten lifetimes with each viewing.

However, in the panic following Johnny Dakota's arrival on the airwaves, one man, Norman Jones, a mild-mannered CPA by day and without a doubt infinitely more mild mannered at night, stepped through the wrong door and fell into the cosmos, tumbling through space and winding up in the only vacant seat in Dakota's studio audience. He is strapped in like the others, given the uniform sunglasses and bucket of pork rinds and left to enjoy the show, which at that precise moment features cohost Wiggy Higgins,



Pete Tongen

imagining himself as a virile Elvis, knee-deep in a puddle of bikini blonds.

All well and good, except that Norman Jones left the interdimensional doorway he came through open. Oh no, what an asshole! Wiggy discovers this and tells the boss, who whispers: “You mean, an interdimensional door that leads to every dimension of here and there, then and now, the kind of door that when left open will pull all of everything into a big nothing more incredibly nothing than anything we’ve ever known?”

The same.

“I hope you’re joking.”

Wiggy wishes he was!

“The whole universe could get pulled through this door,” says Johnny redundantly.

“What are we going to do?” squeals Wiggy.

Shadove Stevens is the creator of this divine madness and plays the roles of Johnny Dakota and Bjorn Muck, head of the mega-corporation World Control (who growls to his aide-de-camp, Murky Dunge, “I’ll tell you what’s wrong, they’re all over the airwaves, and we’re not!”). Stevens is a southern California cult hero for his Federated Stores TV commercials, which he creates and in which he plays Fred Rated, a fast-talking huckster of stereotypes, VCRs, and the like. The commercials are mostly 30-second masterpieces—Monty Pythonesque absurdities that memorably punctuate the eternities of local TV commercial breaks. The

commercials are definitely early spores on the evolutionary chain that led to *Shadoevision*.

“We wanted to create something that would pioneer new experiences in psychological entertainment,” says Stevens about his show. “Something that would perplex you yet compel you to watch it, giving you a story at the same time. A psychic roller coaster, going faster than you can think, hopefully keeping you from changing channels. I figure with random access, remote control, and four hundred channels, people have the attention span of a shellfish.”

Some people have the mind of shellfish, too, which is why many television production companies, to be on the safe side, aim at that intellectual level and work their way up slowly. This show deserves the success of *Family Feud* or *Wheel of Fortune* or *Merv Griffin Show* partly because one of its subliminal messages is that a world that exalts such crap deserves a porridge of it intravenously fed into its brains 24 hours a day.

Stevens, now 39, started out in radio. He had his own radio show at 11, broadcast from his bedroom in North Dakota, and has inflicted his sense of humor on an ever-growing audience since. In LA in the ‘70s, he deejayed and was program director at four FM stations, KMET, KHJ, KRLA, and KROQ, each time making the station No. 1 in the market, a feat equivalent to managing four different teams to winning the World Series (especially in

LA, whose market leaders remain constant for years).

“I was real successful in radio, and radio meant more to me than anything on earth. I loved the magic and the imagination and the theater potential of radio because it all happens in your head. All the radio stations that I ever ran had that theatrical component,” he says.

All of them also screwed with his formula, eventually forcing him to leave, taking success with him like the paper. Finally he quit radio to make TV commercials. The rest (irresistible cliché), as they say, is history (which includes approximately 900 Federated spots).

Off duty, Shadove—real name Terry Ingstad; they don’t give you names like Shadove in North Dakota—is completely unneurotic, which is why he seems an unlikely comedian. He says he doesn’t think of himself as funny, yet he is one of those people who is funny standing still. His eyes are clear and stare directly at you. He speaks in a deep, measured, soft voice that surrounds you and gently holds your attention. He has the same comedic range in his voice that John Cleese has in his, a gift not just of mimicry but of transcending the absurd to find the pathos and humor in the normal.

Interestingly enough, there are 15 or so Shadove Stevenses on the radio around the country. The name is not copyrightable, and the jocks like it because it sticks in the memory.

—Bob Guccione, Jr.

Left: Shadove Stevens as Mozart, of course. Above: Wiggy Higgins (Ed Freeman) in temporary control of the universe.

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EGBERT: I mean to say we haven't seen a real man yet. Wow, look at Patti's hairdo!

hair spray in these videos. You need a



Phil Collins (above): So go home already.

prescription to get it. Hey, there's Jann Wenner. He just threw ketchup in John Travolta's face. Either that or he just vomited blood all over him.

CISCO: This video would have made a great Arid Extra Dry commercial.

EGBERT: But you know, good, honest aerobic sweat doesn't smell bad.

CISCO: And here's Nona's most recent video, "I Need Love." It begins with a monologue by a very good Marilyn Monroe impersonator.

EGBERT: It's not Nona. Her bosom is too substantial.

CISCO: This seems to be another video with no men in it. It's a must see for interior decorators.

EGBERT: There's a great deal of influence here from Alain Resnais's classic existential masterpiece *Last Year at Marienbad*. Halls, corridors, ornate sconces, and baroque plaster.

CISCO: Empty rooms, rare wallpapers. A hotel full of women.

EGBERT: Wait, there's a man. And he's got his hand almost up Nona's bodice. And here's an extraordinary male belly dancer. There are men in this video, but not the types you run across in your average Miller Lite ad.

CISCO: But the girls are terrific, and Nona has a nice Oscar Wilde hairdo.

EGBERT: That girl in the bra was probably the high point of my day so far.

CISCO: We see Nona taking a shower in a white shirt.

EGBERT: As if she were entered in a Wet Calvin Klein Shirt Contest. She is then

cruised by a girl who looks like Boy George. There are a lot of drag queen extras in this video. A lot of hormonal gray areas.

CISCO: And there is a nice sequence with one of New York's more picturesque subway stations, the 53rd Street F stop. That was a nice touch.

EGBERT: By far Nona's best yet. A lot of interplay between illusion and reality.

CISCO: And underwear.

EGBERT: I wish I could make a video. It's a great way to meet spokesmodels. It would be a great opportunity to pick their brains.

CISCO: That's what David Lee Roth does.

EGBERT: By the way, I saw a segment on the news the other night devoted to eligible women in New York, and Paulina, the supermodel we've seen in videos by the Cars, was talking about her eligibility and how hard it is to meet good men.

CISCO: You should get out more, Rog.

EGBERT: I know, Gene, I know. But do you suppose that she and Ric Ocasek are no longer an item?

CISCO: Paulina, if you're reading this, we'd like to know if it's all over with Ric.

EGBERT: That's all we have time for this month, folks. But we'll see you all again

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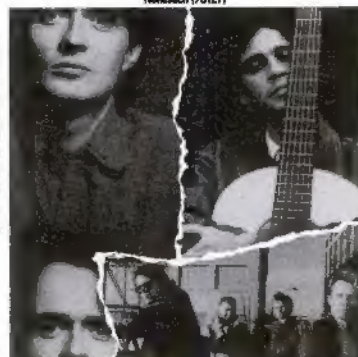
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CAETANO VELOSO

"To the Brazilian people, he is a simple country boy from Bahia, the personification of *allegria*—of letting the good times roll. But his music is anything but simple. The best songs have the harmonic sophistication and the introspective dreaminess of the work of Erik Satie or Bill Evans, and their lyrics are poetry." —*The New Yorker* Newsweek (7/12/71)

SCOTT JOHNSON

"[John Somebody] mirrors the subterranean rumble, the welter of voices and other overlaid sounds of the city, with the cries of superamplified guitars hovering like angels above the fray. It's a compelling marriage of rock elements and classical formalism that doesn't shortchange either." —Robert Palmer, *N.Y. Times* Newsweek (7/13/71)



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No. 69 Avec une Balle

When Serge Gainsbourg's biggest hit, "Je t'aime," stalled at 69 on the American charts, it was clearly a case of la justice poetique.

Article by James Truman

The music room of Serge Gainsbourg's Paris home contains three pianos, a bronze statue, and a telephone. The pianos are decorated with Polaroids of his girlfriend's breasts, arranged horizontally above the keys. The statue overlooks them, nursing a bronze erection. The telephone has been ringing all evening. Gainsbourg leans over and grabs the receiver.

"Qu'est-ce que tu veux? [What do you want?] Eh...? Tu veux me baiser? [You want to fuck me?] Vache! Pute! [Cow! Whore!]"

He hangs up sharply and shrugs his shoulders.

"The fans... they won't leave me alone," he sighs.

He's right: they won't. Even if his number weren't in the phone book, they probably wouldn't. And if they did, you would imagine he'd call them, to find out if they wanted to fuck him. The week before, on a television talk show, he'd put the question to Whitney Houston. "I am not Reagan and you are not Gorbachev, so let's do it," he reasoned. It was a great pickup line. He's still puzzled about why it didn't work.

In France, Serge Gainsbourg is a legend. For 20 years he has reigned as the country's pop superstar. True, there hasn't been much competition, but then Gainsbourg is more than just a pop star. He also reigns as France's leading drunkard, philanderer, beatnik, scandal-maker, and buffoon. In all of these areas the competition is ferocious.

Now 58, he became a pop star fairly late in life. Before that, there had been a wild, memoir-worthy life: studying painting with Léger, hanging out with Dali (they watched porno films together), falling in love with Bardot. It was with Bardot in mind that he wrote "Je t'aime," a graphic, between-the-sheets love song that, for 1968, was scandalously rude. When Bardot had second thoughts about releasing it, he rerecorded the song with Jane Birkin, a British actress whom he later married. Banned everywhere upon release, the record sold more than four million copies. In America it was quickly withdrawn from sale and stalled on the charts at No. 69. This fact still delights Gainsbourg. He runs out of the room and staggers back with a giant blowup of the relevant chart, snorting with glee: "Superbe, superbe!"



Youri Lenquette/Sygma

The record's vocal style became Gainsbourg's signature. Not much of a singer, he's a terrific heavy breather and a crooner of genius. He is also a songwriter and storyteller of rare perversity. That is, there aren't many other pop singers who would make concept albums about a man who has a cabbage for a head (*L'homme à Tête de Chou*) or write *Histoire de Melody Nelson*. The latter, his masterpiece, tells the story of a man who runs over a 12-year-old girl in his Rolls-Royce, takes her to a convent, rapes her, buys her a plane ticket home, and spends the rest of his life in despair after the plane crashes.

"It is like taking photographs of the sky," he offers. "When the sky is blue, the picture shows nothing. When there are clouds, then you see a picture. It is the clouds that interest me. I am a sad man."

In the late '70s it was reggae that interested him. He recorded a couple of dubious LPs with Sly and Robbie and put out a dub version of the French national anthem, which caused another scandal and also went platinum. Oddly enough, it also made him honorary leader of the French punk movement. "They found a guy who didn't care about anything, who was antiestablishment like them. They didn't like me, they loved me," he says.

But then Sid Vicious died, and Gainsbourg decided he could never make another reggae record. How these two connect is obscure, even after he's explained it. Somewhere along the way, it also involves the Dadaists, Rimbaud, Marilyn Monroe, and Francis Bacon. But that's typical: Gainsbourg is more than adept at the French art of name-dropping.

With Sid gone, Serge decided to go disco, recording

in New York with black session musicians. *Love on the Beat* is his first LP to be released in America. Even though almost all the words are in French, a sticker on the cover warns of explicit lyrics and advises parental caution. The caution is most needed for the album's closing track, a song about incest sung by himself and his 13-year-old daughter, Charlotte, and the title song, which has a woman's bloodcurdling screams for a backing track.

Gainsbourg is offended by the idea that it's an S & M song. "Not at all. What happened was one night I put a tape recorder under my bed, I fuck my girlfriend, and she makes these noises." By way of apology, you compliment him on his stamina (the song goes on forever). But he just sniffs the air. "Actually, the tape went on for an hour. I had to shorten it."

Apropos of nothing, he suddenly announces that he's about to die. "I smoke and drink too much. Perhaps I have two or three years left, but no more," he says, looking unconcerned. "The only thing I regret is that I have not been in a major art. I am only a small master of a minor art. It is just that we live in a time when the minor arts have taken over the major arts, they have fucked them completely. This is why Gainsbourg is famous."

"The thing I am most proud of, I think, is 'Je t'aime,'" he continues. "I think it is one of the best love songs ever written. In my own life I have never been able to tell a woman that I love her. I'm not sure if it is because I am too shy or too smart. I think it's because I am too smart." At which point he drains his glass, staggers to his feet, falls back into the chair, and looks distraught. "Oh shit, I'm pissed again."

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